SHORT SERMONS

FOR

LOW MASSES

WITHDRAWN

FOR ALL THE SUNDAYS OF THE YEAR

BY

F. HEFFNER

Priest of the Order of St. Norbert

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VOL. II.

NEW YORK

JOSEPH F. WAGNER, INC.

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JOHN M. FARLEY, D.D.

Archbishop of New York

NEW YORK, October 21, 1906

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FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Proper and Improper Love of Children.

"And when he was twelve years old, they going up into Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast."—Luke ii. 42.

SYNOPSIS.—The foster parents of Jesus a beautiful example for all parents. Childhood the time for the inculcation of virtue and fear of God. As the child is, so will the grown-up person be. Improper love of children. Tobias. Meeting of parents and children as it will be in heaven and in hell.

To-day's gospel tells us that Mary and Joseph went to Jerusalem every year for the solemn Feast of the Pasch. They lived in Nazareth, a considerable distance from Jerusalem; but this did not prevent them from going to the feast to adore God in His Temple; and as soon as Jesus was able to travel He went with them. Mary and Joseph thereby gave a beautiful example of piety and of loyalty to the law. All parents should imitate this example by inculcating in their children even in childhood the virtue and fear of God. On this subject I will address the parents to-day.

If a child is deceitful, bold, rude, immodest and dishonest, or if he has any other bad traits, he will have these bad habits and vices in a greater degree in later years unless the parents strive to eradicate the germ of these vices. But if a child is religious, modest, virtuous and pious he will also have these good qualities in later life. Therefore Holy Scripture exhorts parents to be watchful over the behavior of their children and to educate them in virtue and piety, and the parents are warned that if they fail to do this they will experience nothing but grief and disgrace on account of their children, and, moreover, will be punished eternally for their negligence. "A horse not broken becometh stubborn," says the wise Sirach (Eccl. xxx. 8), "and a child left to himself will become headstrong. Give thy son his way, and he shall make thee afraid; play with him, and he shall make thee sorrowful. Laugh not with him, lest thou have sorrow and at the last thy teeth be set on edge. Give him not liberty in his youth and wink not at his devices. Bow down his neck while he is young and beat his sides while he is a child, lest he grow stubborn and regard thee not, and so be a sorrow of heart to thee." And the apostle Paul writes:

"If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (I. Tim. v. 8).

So many parents, alas! pay no attention to this. They do not instruct their children in virtue and piety, and, loving them blindly, do not punish the wrong they do. Their main care is for the temporal prosperity of their children. We have an example in Agrippina, the mother of Nero. A wise woman had warned and foretold her that unless she would punish the faults of her little son he would grow up in evil ways and eventually murder her. The mother answered: "He may murder me if only he becomes emperor." A further example is the selfish request of the mother of James and John that Christ might give her sons the highest places of honor in His kingdom, that He might place one at His right hand and the other at His left. Would to God there were not so many parents whose only concern is the temporal welfare of their children. They toil from early morn till late at night in the sweat of their brow; they live scantily and deprive themselves of every pleasure, that they might leave their children in comfortable circumstances. They plan profitable marriages for their children, but they do not endeavor to raise them in a Christian manner, to eradicate their faults and bad habits and to lead them on the path of virtue and the fear of God; they will not only cause the temporal and eternal ruin of their children, but they prepare for themselves worry, grief and the judgment of God.

To such parents St. Chrysostom exclaims: "If you wish to give your son riches teach him to be pious, virtuous and charitable; teach him to keep the commandments of God and to fear Him, for this is true wealth, not subjected to the inconstancy of luck; for this is the true art of enabling us to see the bright side of everything." The just Tobias taught his son from childhood to fear God and to avoid sin. "All the days of thy life," he said to him, "have God in thy mind: and take heed thou never consent to sin, nor transgress the commandments of the Lord Our God. Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person: for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee" (Tob. iv. 6, 7). He gave him other wise admonitions, and concluded with the words: "Fear not, my son: we lead indeed a poor life, but we shall have many good things if we fear God, and depart from all sin, and do that which is good" (Tob. iv. 23).

Would that all parents would take this to heart! Would that they would instruct and advise their children in such a manner, and lead them along the path of virtue and piety! The world would be better for it and fewer parents would suffer from the disobedience, neglect and recklessness of their children.

A pious man once asked God to let him realize the tortures of the damned and the glories of the elect. An angel led him into hell, and among other dreadful sights he saw a father and son cursing each other. The father said to the son: "Cursed be the hour in which you were born to me and cursed be all I have done for you. In order to leave you wealth I became a thief and usurer, and thus forfeited my salvation." The son, however, answered: "Cursed be the hour at which I was born, for you did not teach me to keep the commandments of God, to be virtuous and pious, to be charitable to the poor, but you even gave me a bad example: instead of punishing me for my faults you condoned them, and you are the cause of my damnation." Then the angel led him into heaven. Here he also saw a father and son incessantly blessing each other. "O blessed father! eternal praise and honor be to you, because from childhood you taught me to fear God, to pray, to love Him and to be virtuous." And the father said: "Blessed are you, my child! Blessed is your obedience which you have shown in following my teachings and admonitions, by avoiding sin and vice and by choosing the way of virtue; for thereby we have both become worthy to be counted among the happy band of the elect."

Take this to heart, Christian parents! If you wish your children to be comfortable and happy advance them in virtue! If you wish to be saved with your children, above all be concerned for your own salvation and that of your children! Bring them up in the discipline and doctrine of the Lord by word and deed, so that, thanks to your diligent training, it may be said of your child what to-day's gospel says of the Child Jesus: He "advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and men!" Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

The Holy Name.

"His name was called Jesus."—Luke ii. 21.

SYNOPSIS.—The proper use of the Holy Name; its blessings. Miracles worked by this Name. Improper usage. No merit in uttering it without devotion. A serious matter to use it improperly. Begin all your undertakings in this Holy Name.

To-day we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Name of Jesus, that blessed name which God Himself gave to His Son, and before which, as the apostle says, "every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth" (Phil. ii. 10). We should consider ourselves fortunate that without our merit we have become enabled to use this Name, for, as St. Luke writes, "there is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). St. Augustine says: "No one should be proud of this name, nor mention it, unless he avoid sin." And for what reason? King David answers: "Holy and terrible is his name" (Ps. cx. 9). We should learn to properly use the name of Jesus, for only then will it bring blessings to us. Just as fire may either cook or burn the food, so the Holy Name of Jesus will save or damn us, according to the way we use it. Of the good use of the name of Jesus, the apostle says: "If thou confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, thou shalt be saved" (Rom. x. 9); of the bad use, however, it is written: "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take the name of the Lord, his God, in vain" (Ex. xx. 7). I wish to speak to you to-day of the good and bad uses of this name, and will begin in the name of Jesus.

I. The proper use of the Holy Name of Jesus is very advantageous to the soul; it strengthens us in faith, hope, and charity. Why, asks St. Bernard, did the light of true faith rise so suddenly and commonly in the whole world? Because it was proclaimed through the Holy Name of Jesus. The apostles proclaimed this praiseworthy Name wherever they went, thereby enlightening the minds of the people and imprinting the holy name upon their hearts. This

name not only sheds the light of true faith, but also strengthens our hope and refreshes the soul. "And let them trust in thee, who know thy name," says the holy King David (Ps. ix. 11). And why, asks St. Bernard, should those not hope who invoke the name of Jesus, when this is the very name of the Saviour, who opened the portals of heaven to them and showed to them the way to eternal happiness? A Christian soul will not only be strengthened in hope and faith by imploring the name of Jesus, but will also be encouraged in charity. The remembrance of their Saviour, who loved them even unto death, and the hope to see Him face to face, encourages the just to love Jesus and to follow His example: and if trials and tribulations visit them, if temptations trouble them, their love for Jesus will overcome all. The invocation of His name will drive away the evil spirits, will give courage and patience in temptations, and will make it easy to walk in the path of virtue. Try to call upon the name of Jesus with devotion and you will find yourself wonderfully strengthened in sorrow and temptations. If you invoke this Holy Name the evil spirit will flee, your inordinate desires will be overcome, the tempter will leave you unmolested, the world will not disturb your peace, you will be victorious, to say with David: "Through thy name we will despise them that rise up against us" (Ps. xliii. 6).

How can I properly recount all the advantages this adorable Name gives us? The proud King Alexander fancied that by his mere name his friend Pyrrhus, who was seriously ill, might be cured; but in vain. By the devout and confident invocation of the Holy Name of Jesus, however, the apostles and other saints did cure the sick, they expelled Satan, and benefited the people in many other ways. For instance, St. Peter said to the lame man, at the gate of the Temple in Jerusalem: "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, arise and walk. And he leaping up, stood, and walked" (Acts iii. 6, 8). I could go on for days, if I were to enumerate the many pains the name of Jesus "as oil poured out" (Canticle of Can. i. 2) has soothed, the many wounds it has healed, the many poor and oppressed it has made contented with their lot; however, mind well, it is advantageous to soul and body only when properly used.

II. To convince you of the fact that the improper usage of the name of Jesus is a serious matter, the words of Holy Scripture are

sufficient: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." What did Pilate and the maid of Caiphas merit by uttering the name of Jesus? Nothing good. Heathens, Turks and many godless Christians also use the name of Jesus, but to them it has no blessings. In the mouth of sinners this adorable Name is often misused and dishonored. There are persons who have acquired the habit of carelessly uttering the name of Jesus. They give no heed to the words of Holy Scripture: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for he shall not be unpunished that taketh His name upon a vain thing" (Deut. v. 11). How must the holy name of Jesus be used? St. Chrysostom answers: "Call upon it in prayer, call upon it for your salvation, only then you will experience the beneficial effects of it." If, however, you "take it upon a vain thing," you will despise this Holy Name and provoke God's anger. We can not merit by uttering this Holy Name without devotion, "he looked upon the Almighty as if He could do nothing" (Job xxii. 17). Therefore, St. Augustine says: "If you wish to implore the name of Jesus, avoid sin."

You have learned now how the Holy Name of Jesus should be used and of what merit the proper use is to body and soul. Utter the adorable name of Jesus always with reverence and devotion, call upon it with confidence in danger and temptations, in trials and tribulations, in abandonment and need, and this Name will be "as oil poured out," which soothes, strengthens and heals. Begin your work in the holy name of Jesus, bear your troubles in the holy name of Jesus, in short, "All, whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Col. iii. 17). Then will come to pass what is written: "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord, shall be saved" (Rom. x. 13). Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Unheard Prayers.

"And behold a leper came and adored Him, saying: Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean."—Matt. viii. 11.

SYNOPSIS.—Why our prayers seem sometimes not heard. Reasons: 1. God may leave prayers unanswered, because we ask for something which would work injury to our soul; 2. The fault may lie with ourselves.

When Jesus came down from the mountain, on which He had preached the Sermon on the Mount, "a leper came and adored Him, saying: Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus, stretching forth his hand touched him, saying: I will; be thou made clean. And forthwith his leprosy was cleaned. And when he had entered into Capharnaum there came to him a centurion beseeching him, saying: Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy and is grievously tormented. And Jesus saith to him: I will come and heal him." The loving Saviour thus heard the prayers of both. We, my dear children, often pray and receive no response. What is the reason? I will put before you to-day two reasons why our prayers may not be heard. The first refers to God; the second lies with ourselves.

I. The kind and merciful God often allows our prayers to remain unanswered just because He *is* kind and merciful. When that for which we pray is not beneficial, but detrimental to our souls, by ignoring our petitions He bestows a great favor upon us. One of the Fathers of the Church has explained this in the following parable: A sick person on the way to recovery will ask for all kinds of food, but the physician will refuse him his request, because the desired food will be detrimental, and may even prove fatal to him. In a like manner does God treat us. Our inordinate desires are the diseases whereby the spirit becomes infected. We turn to God, complain of our trials and beseech Him to free us from certain cares, or to grant us certain benefits. But God listens not to our supplications. He ignores our pleading, because the granting of the same would be harmful to us. St. Paul was seriously tormented with desires, and thrice asked the Lord to free him, but invariably he received this answer: "My grace is sufficient; it will strengthen you and carry you to victory."

If a physician allows to a very sick person everything he desires it is a sign that there is no hope of his recovery. The Israelites, when they had become filled with manna, begged Moses to procure meat for them. He acceded to their desire, but to their detriment: "As yet their meat was in their mouth and the wrath of God came upon them" (Ps. lxxvii. 30). Like Paul and the Israelites, we often pray for earthly goods and riches when poverty would be better for us; some one may desire to be praised and honored by the people, and he does not see that this would make him proud and would be the cause of his perdition. Another asks for health and a long life, and both may mean eternal damnation for him. So you see we may often desire things detrimental to our soul, and almighty God ignores our pleading because He does not want to give to His children anything that is harmful to their eternal welfare.

II. The other reasons why our prayers may not be answered is found in ourselves. God does not listen to our petitions because we do not listen to His petitions made through His ministers. How often does He exhort us, through guardian angels, through preachers and confessors, through parents and friends, by trials and tribulations, by sudden deaths of loved ones, to turn from our way of sin and to walk the path of virtue; but, alas, we hear Him not; we ignore all His admonitions, and do not give heed to the voice of God which calls us to repentance; we live careless and impenitent lives and offend Him every day. Can we, therefore, be surprised if God does not hear us? We ask for peace, but receive it not, because we are constantly waging war against God by sinning in every way. We ask for daily bread, for a good harvest, and still often see how frost and rain, heat and drought, hail and storm injure our crops. And why does this happen? Because *we* do not relieve the suffering of others; we do not give alms to the poor; we refuse to do our share for the support of His Church! We ask to be spared from serious illness, affliction and suffering, but our requests are not complied with, because *we* do not turn away from sin and do not obey the commandments of God. "Behold," says the prophet Isaias (lix. 1), "the hand of the Lord is not shortened that it can not save, neither is his ear heavy that it can not hear. But your iniquities have divided between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he should not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers

with iniquity: your lips have spoken lies, and your tongue uttereth iniquity." And the prophet Jeremias complains: "We have done wickedly and provoked thee to wrath; therefore thou art inexorable. Thou hast set a cloud before thee, that our prayer may not pass through" (Lam. iii. 42-44). As the clouds sometimes prevent the sun from lighting and warming the earth, so our sins, forming a barrier between God and ourselves, prevent the light of His grace from penetrating and distributing happiness and blessing to us; we misuse His gifts by offending Him, and therefore we should not wonder if He discontinues His gifts and chastises us.

Let us therefore remove the barrier which our sins have established between God and ourselves! Let us with penitent and contrite hearts say, with the leper in to-day's gospel: "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean!" Let us henceforth hear Him and His priests; let us observe His commandments and live good lives, because then only may we hope that our prayers will be heard and that grace and peace and happiness will be imparted to us. "Now we know," writes St. John (ix. 31), "that God doth not hear sinners: but if a man be a server of God, and doth his will, him he heareth."

Do not let us murmur or complain if our prayers are in vain, but let us rather blame ourselves. Be careful to remove all obstacles that may prevent your prayers from being heard. Ask only for those things that are wholesome and profitable to you, and above all ask for the grace of conversion. "And my people, upon whom my name is called, being converted, shall make supplication to me, and seek out my face, and do penance for their most wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins and will hear their land" (II. Par. xiv.). If we pray with a pure, or at least a penitent heart our prayers will *never* be in vain; the Lord will hear us and mercifully grant the necessities of body and soul. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Resignation to the Will of God.

"Why are you fearful, O ye of little faith?"—Matt. viii. 26.

SYNOPSIS.—In misfortune we are often inclined to think that divine Providence has forsaken us. A sinful thought. No one has power to injure us except by the dispensation of God, and He ordains everything for our best. Resignation to the will of God and hope in His mercy and providence.

To-day's gospel, which pictures to us the danger in which the apostles found themselves on the stormy sea, reminds us of the many trials and hardships that we suffer while on our journey through the tempestuous sea of this world, and before we safely reach the shore of rest and eternal happiness. Parents sometimes there are who do not know where to obtain bread for their children, sometimes wicked children cause sorrow to their parents, sickness and death visit us, the fields fail to bring forth abundant fruits, provisions are expensive, the fear of war may oppress us; and all this time the Lord seems to be asleep and to have withdrawn His aid. People often murmur about ill-luck and hardships, and they are exhorted in to-day's gospel to contemplate the wisdom of divine Providence and the sinfulness of doubting it.

I. When Our Saviour was in the boat with His apostles, on Lake Genesareth, a great tempest arose, so that the boat was covered with waves; but Jesus was asleep. He had betaken Himself to the boat to escape the great multitudes of people and to get some rest, and He slept peacefully though the storm raged so tremendously that the apostles feared they would perish. Our Lord wanted to teach us the lesson that in oppression and sorrows, in the hardships and sufferings of this life, there is no better means to keep up courage, and to preserve peace of heart, than to quietly and hopefully resign ourselves to the will and the care of God. Such resignation alone enabled the pious Job to be patient and steadfast in all his sufferings and trials. He had lost all his property, the fruits of his field had been consumed by fire, his house had collapsed and all his children had perished, he was ill and had to bear the scoffing of his wife; but in all his sufferings he did not murmur nor complain, because he hoped in God and

resigned himself to God's holy will. "The Lord gave, he said, and the Lord hath taken away: as it hath pleased the Lord so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job i. 21). When God asked King David to choose one of three punishments, either a seven years' famine, a three months' war, or a three days' pestilence, he chose the last, saying: "It is better that I should fall into the hands of the Lord (for His mercies are many) than into the hands of men" (II. Kings xxiv. 14).

In like manner should we act if troubles and sorrows are meted out to us. God is Our Lord and King and we are His subjects. If He commands, we must obey; if He sends us trials and tribulations we must accept them from His hand and bear them patiently. Whatsoever we meet with, howsoever we fare, we must have confidence, assured that all is ordained according to His holy will. Our Saviour reminded us that without His will not a hair shall fall from our heads. We are often inclined to think that we suffer this or that harm because certain enemies wish it to us, but this is not so; everything that happens in this world happens because God ordains or allows it. "A person," says St. Augustine, "can not do mischief to another unless God gives him power." Therefore Our Saviour said to Pilate: "Thou wouldst have no power over me, if thou hadst not received it from above." If, therefore, everything is ordained by the will of God, who would dare to murmur, who would dare to doubt that all is disposed for the best, even though, in our shortsightedness, we can not comprehend it?

II. It is not only fit that we resign ourselves to the will of God, but we must also have a steadfast hope that He will help us and that He does all for our best. With this hope we shall be strong and confident in tribulations and shall not succumb under calamities. At one time, when St. Hilarion had boarded a ship to escape from enemies, his ship was attacked by pirates. While his companions were filled with fear, the saint quietly said: "Why are you afraid, O ye of little faith? Are the pirates mightier than King Pharao with his army? And yet God made him and his host perish in the Red Sea." The pirates had already advanced to take them captive when St. Hilarion held out his hand and in the name of the Lord bade them to desist. Immediately the pirates fled in terror.

Behold, my Christians, this holy man had no fear because he relied on God and was confident that God would protect him from the

enemy. If we had such strong hope when trials and hardships visit us, when want and need oppress us, when hard times come and we do not know how to get along, we should never lose courage nor peace of heart. We would then say, God, who alone knows what is good for me, has sent it all and I will resign myself to His will; He will give me strength to endure it all for the welfare of my soul, or He will lessen my sufferings if it be well; if, however, I am impatient, murmur and complain, I shall only increase my cross and profit nothing; on the contrary, God will become provoked and He may inflict more rigorous punishment. Jonas who did not want to obey the command of God, and who boarded a ship to flee to Tharsis, angered the Lord and as a punishment was thrown into the sea, swallowed by a fish and released only after he had pleaded for mercy and promised to execute the command of God. It is always better to kiss the rod with which God chastises us, to resign ourselves to His will, and, relying upon His goodness and might, to say, with the apostles: "Lord, save us, we perish." It is true we may not know just why the Lord sends us this or that suffering. We experience the dispensations of almighty God, without understanding how they are brought about. But there will come a day when we shall recognize that God in His wisdom and mercy assigned a certain amount of happiness and sorrow to every one and that He was just to us all. Instead of murmuring and complaining let us honor and praise the all-wise God and say: "He has done all things well!"

Let us, therefore, ever resign ourselves to the will of God and not become discouraged. Let us rely upon Him and He will keep His word: "Invoke me in the day of need, I will save you and you shall praise my name!" Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY.

Adversities.

"An enemy hath done this."—Matt. xiii. 28.

SYNOPSIS.—The cockle in the field likened to the adversities that God permits to befall mankind. Our sins the cause. David's sin and punishment. Our ingratitude and our abuse of God's blessings. Repent of your faults and make yourselves worthy of God's blessings by a faithful observance of His commandments.

A man sowed wheat in his field. But while his men were asleep the enemy came and sowed cockle among the wheat. And when the plant had sprung up, and began to bring forth fruit, there appeared also the cockle. "And the servants of the good man of the house coming said to him: Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? Whence then hath it cockle? And he said to them: An enemy hath done this." And this very question is asked in our days, for often you hear the cry: From whence comes all the evil in the world, bad times, famine, sickness, and all the troubles and sufferings which every one of us more or less experiences?

I shall endeavor to-day to answer briefly the question why there is so much suffering and adversity in this world.

Trials and tribulations are sent by God; for without His will no sparrow shall fall from the roof nor a hair from our heads. The wise son of Sirach says: "Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches, are from God" (Eccl. xi. 14). But why does almighty God permit people to suffer? Why does He seize the scourge and punish His children with suffering and failure? We are not able to answer these questions as did the good man in to-day's gospel by saying: "An enemy hath done this," we must say it is due to our own fault that He punishes us; it is sin that causes all the evil which we lament. In proof of this we need only study Holy Scripture. There on the very first pages we find this confirmed. What was it that robbed our first parents of paradise? Sin. Why was the sentence of death passed upon all their descendants? Because of sin. What was the reason that God cursed the earth, why was Adam compelled to earn his bread in the sweat of his brow, what made the animals the enemies of man? Again, sin. Sin, therefore, is the seed which brings

forth cockle. If man had not sinned he would not have been subjected to sickness, he would never be in want of earthly goods, and all the complaints and laments now so frequent on account of sufferings and trials, would never have been heard.

The source of many evils which oppress us is therefore not far to seek; it lies in ourselves, it is found in the sins by which we offend the just God who rewards every one according to his deeds. When the Lord sent Nathan to David to punish him for the crime of adultery, Nathan said to him: "There were two men in one city, the one rich, the other poor. The rich man had an abundance of sheep and oxen. The poor man had nothing at all but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and fostered, and which had grown up in his house with his children, eating of his bread, and drinking of his cup, and sleeping on his bosom: and it was unto him as a child. And when a certain stranger had come to visit the rich man, he spared to take of his own sheep and oxen, to make a feast for that stranger who was come to him but took the poor man's ewe and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David's anger being exceedingly kindled against that man, he said to Nathan: As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this is a child of death. He shall restore the ewe fourfold because he did this thing and had no pity. And Nathan said to David: Thou art the man. Thus saith the Lord the God of Israel: I anointed thee king over Israel, and I delivered thee from the hand of Saul. And gave thee thy master's house and thy master's wives, into thy bosom, and gave thee the house of Israel and Juda; and if these things be little I shall add far greater things unto thee. Why therefore hast thou despised the word of the Lord to do evil in my sight? Thou hast killed Urias the Hethite with the sword and hast his wife to be thy wife, and hast slain him with the sword of the children of Ammon. Therefore the sword shall never depart from thy house because thou hast despised me and hast taken the wife of Urias the Hethite to be thy wife. Thus saith the Lord: Behold I will raise up evil against thee" (II. Kings xii. 1-11).

If any one wrongs you, no doubt you are provoked, as for instance if some one robs, deceives, or defrauds you. You get angry if any one dishonors you or takes away your good name, and, like David, you say: "As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this is a child

of death," but Nathan might say to you as he said to David: "Thou art the man," your sins are the cause of the evil that befalls you.

And what are the chief sins that cause the Lord to punish us? They are the lack of faith and the prevailing vices; carelessness in prayer and neglect of divine service, lies and hypocrisy, pride and vanity, gluttony and intemperance, quarrels and disputes, disobedience of children towards their parents, avarice and uncharitableness, and numerous other sins and vices, committed everywhere, which cry to heaven for vengeance. But, let me tell you, it is also our ingratitude toward almighty God, who daily, even hourly, overwhelms us with innumerable favors. We fail to acknowledge God as our good father and greatest benefactor, we do not give Him due thanks; instead of that we misuse His gifts and blessings in deeds that provoke and offend Him. Is it to be wondered, then, if God withdraws His blessing so that our undertakings fail; if sickness and trouble visit us, wants and need oppress us? As long as we are prosperous we do not think of God, we live carelessly, neglect the salvation of our souls, like the prodigal son who did not remember his father and home until he had squandered his fortune and was reduced to misery. Are there not many of us, who as long as they are successful and as long as they have everything in abundance, strive only for earthly honors and forget their God? If suddenly hard times come, if troubles and sufferings are meted out to them, then there is no end to their lamentations. Then they forget that they and they alone are at fault. They provoked and offended God by sinning, therefore He punishes them according to His justice.

When David, through Nathan, was brought to the knowledge that he deserved the punishment of God, he said to Nathan: "I have sinned against the Lord" (II. Kings xii. 13). We all have sinned against the Lord, one more, the other less. We all have deserved punishment and chastisement. Therefore we must not murmur and complain if sufferings and trials come to us, we must rather resign ourselves to the will of God, and bear patiently whatever adversities He designs to send us. Let us repent of our faults with an humble and penitent heart and plead for mercy and forgiveness. Let us not forget that God daily heaps favors upon us and blessings upon our undertakings. Let us give Him due thanks and prove our gratitude by faithful observance of the commandments. May the Lord grant us His grace to do this! Amen.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Good Works.

"The kingdom of heaven is like to an householder, who went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his vineyard."—Matt. xx. 1.

SYNOPSIS.—Eternal happiness cannot be gained without good works. "The kingdom of Heaven suffers violence." The nature of the works that merit heaven. Take advantage of your time before the night comes.

To-day's gospel clearly sets forth the fact that we may attain eternal happiness only by laboring for it. "Call the laborers, the lord of the vineyard saith to his steward, and pay them their hire." Only those who had labored were rewarded, and the Lord "will render to every man according to his works" (Matt. xvi. 27). Even Christ, the Son of God, entered into the glory of His father only after He had labored and suffered, and He thereby gave us an example which we must follow if we would be saved. We all wish to be saved; but if we consider how little we are concerned about our salvation, how little we practise charity, then we have reason to be fearful of our salvation. I will explain to you to-day (1) that salvation will only be gained as a reward of good deeds, and (2) the nature of these good deeds.

1. In his fourteenth psalm David exclaims: "Lord, who shall dwell in thy tabernacle? or who shall rest in thy holy hill?" and he answers "He that walketh without blemish, and worketh justice: he that speaketh truth in his heart, who hath not used deceit in his tongue: nor hath done evil to his neighbors" (Ps. xiv. 1-3). This means, that whosoever wishes to enter heaven must have a sinless heart, adorned with virtues and merits. Therefore Holy Scripture compares the kingdom of heaven to a treasure and to a precious stone. To obtain a treasure you must exert yourself and work for it; to find a precious stone you must make search unremittingly. Thus it is with heaven: heaven can not be gained without toil and exertion. St. Jerome tells us that we shall fail if, desiring to reach the aim of our existence, we do not make use of the means necessary to gain this end. Heaven is a reward which must be gained by working for it; it is a crown which must be merited; it is a mountain and you must exert yourself to climb it; it is a fortress to be taken by vio-

lence. Therefore our Saviour says: "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and only those who use violence shall merit it:" we must deserve this happiness; for without work we gain no reward, without battle no victory, without merit no crown. Millions of good people have no doubt already entered heaven, but not one of them has entered unless by reason of his good works he was worthy to enter. How then dare you hope to enter heaven, if you do not toil, if you do not strive to become rich in good deeds? Think of your indolence in the service of God, of your carelessness in prayer and tardiness in the reception of the Sacraments, of your sinful inclinations and habits, of your uncharitableness and ingratitude, of your many other sins, and you will have to admit that hitherto you have not worked for heaven nor gathered any treasures for eternity. If you desire to begin to-day your toil for heaven, let us see what is the nature of the work which alone is deserving of heaven.

2. In order to have merit for heaven a work must (1) be good, (2) be performed in state of grace, (3) have a good intention; it must be performed not in order to gain praise from man, but for the love of God and to further His greater honor and glory. Sinful deeds, deeds performed in the state of sin, or with a bad intention, can have no merit. If you are in the state of sin you can, it is true, perform good deeds, such as praying, fasting, giving alms and the like, but you can not through these deeds enter heaven; however, if your heart is cleansed from sin, not only pious works, such as praying, fasting, and giving alms, have their merit, but even works in themselves neither good nor bad, such as eating, drinking, working, become meritorious if done with a good intention. This is what the apostle means when he exhorts us to do all for the glory of God. "Eating or drinking, or whatever you may do, do it for the greater honor and glory of God."

Such is the nature of deeds worthy of the kingdom of heaven. And now ask yourselves how many of such deeds you have performed. Possibly many of your good works, as praying, fasting, almsgiving, etc., have been performed in the state of sin. Moreover you may have been deficient in the performance of good deeds when in the state of grace. If somewhere in your vicinity a precious treasure were to be gained how quickly you would run, how hard you would work for it! God offers you an infinitely precious treasure, in com-

parison to which all treasures and riches of this world are but dust, and you will do nothing to gain it! There you worry and toil in the sweat of your brow to earn earthly wealth; you are constantly planning how to make this life easy, and you do nothing to gain heaven. What profit will it be to you if you become rich and esteemed in this world, but lose the treasure of heaven? "What doth it profit a man," says our Saviour, "if he gain the whole world but suffer the loss of his soul?" "For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. For he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption. But he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting" (Gal. vi. 8).

"And in doing good let us not fail, for in due time we shall reap not failing" (Gal. vi. 9). There is yet time to reform, we can still gain heaven by performing good deeds. Let us take advantage of our time, and work while it is day, before the night comes, in which no man can work. Let us cleanse our hearts from sin by an upright confession and sincere repentance and gather treasures for the kingdom of heaven, so that at the end of our time we may be among those of whom God will say to his angels: "Call the laborers and pay them their hire." Amen.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

False Friends.

"Then the devil cometh and taketh the word out of their heart."—Luke viii. 12.

SYNOPSIS.—Man responsible for more lost souls than even the devil. Beware of false friends. The devil could not do harm to the Saviour, but men crucified Him. The devil could but move Job to prayer, while his friends succeeded in getting him vexed. The devil if he would appear visibly among us would accomplish nothing, while his wicked helpers among men gain entrance and confidence everywhere under the guise of friends. Flee bad companions.

The seed of the divine word is sown for many, but yields fruit for very few. The devil is to blame "for he cometh and taketh the word out of their hearts, lest believing they should be saved," but not alone the devil, for according to to-day's gospel he only takes part of the word, whereas man prevents the seed from yielding fruit in a twofold manner, because he either does not allow it to take root, or suffers it to be choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life. Who therefore causes greater injury to the word of God, the devil or man? Man is more to be blamed for the loss of souls than even the devil.

It is not rare to find the servant more severe than the master, the court attendants more exacting than the judge. Satan wishes to gain the mastery over mankind and accomplishes this with the help of man. Therefore St. Thomas Aquinas calls man a slave of Satan. Who is more to be feared, the servant or the master, man or Satan? I answer, with Our Saviour: "Beware of men" (Matt. x. 17), for they seduce more souls, and cast more souls into hell, than the devil. A legend tells us that a holy man once found a devil asleep at the gates of a city and, waking him, asked why he slept? Satan answered: Well may I sleep, when there are so many in the city awake and doing my work. Even if the devil were asleep all the time there would be plenty of people to watch and carry on his work. Masters are working for him if they allow their servants to be sinning. Working for Satan are all those who tolerate in their houses gambling, immodest talk and sinful entertainments. Parents are working for him if they make light of their children's wicked doings,

if they allow them to be out at night regardless of the bad companions with whom they associate. If men then aid Satan's work in such manner, and even do his work, then no doubt it must be successful. When Satan sought the Lord's destruction by tempting Him in the desert he could gain no power over Him; but, behold, when Jesus came to Jerusalem it was the people who cried: "Crucify him! Crucify him!" Behold the cross: It was not Satan, it was man who nailed Our Saviour to the cross.

Over no man was the devil given greater power than over pious Job. He robbed him of all his property and caused his children to perish in the ruins of his house. Yet, what did he accomplish? Nothing. Job fell down upon the ground and prayed to the Lord and said: "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away: as it hath pleased the Lord so is it done: blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job i. 21). But when his friends came and harassed him with their insinuations, even patient Job lost his temper and said things for which he was sorry ever after. Satan could not vex the soul of pious Job, but his dear friends made out of this strong man a wretched slave. If the good friends of pious Job could accomplish so much, what will false and wicked friends accomplish with us? They rob us of innocence and virtue, honor and reputation, soul and salvation, and still we call them friends. We call friends those who lead us into bad company, who rob our hearts of virtues and principles, who keep us from prayer and divine service, from obedience toward our parents and from diligently performing the duties of our state, those who encourage our evil ways, assist us in our sins, who in our presence carry on immodest and blasphemous conversations and who give us bad books and irreligious papers. There would not be so many innocent souls led astray if God should open the portals of hell and allow the devil to visibly walk about the earth; for then we would recognize his hideous nature and flee. But under the guise of friendship, the devil's helpers, bad men, easily attack innocence and virtue, and spread vice everywhere, without being feared, because they are considered friends.

Are there perhaps some among us who at one time or another have been helpers of Satan by leading others into sin? Are there those who laugh at and mock virtue, who praise sin and depravity, and in this manner, like the devil, strive to take the word of God out of our hearts; or those who impart the false teachings and prin-

ciples of this world to inexperienced youth and lead them into company where all virtue and fear of God is scoffed at and the most abominable sins committed without shame? Alas, how great the number of those who incite men against one another and cause quarrels and disputes! How many, who through words and deeds, by flattery and threats, lead innocent youth to vice! How many parents who instead of teaching, by word and example, their children to do good, ruin them by giving them a bad education! How many masters there are who instead of being concerned for the spiritual welfare of their servants even lead them astray!

We live in a time in which scandal and seduction are abundant, and many believe in the sentiments which the wise Solomon puts in the mouth of the godless: "Let us lie in wait for the just, because he is not for our turn, and he is contrary to our doings, and upbraideth us with transgressions of the law, and divulgeth against us the sins of our way of life" (Wisdom ii. 12). If thus the godless lie in wait for the just, they strive, like Satan, to take the word of God, virtue and innocence out of their hearts and to cast their souls into eternal fire.

Beware of men, for often those whom you consider friends are but wolves in sheep's clothing. If you associate with bad companions you will become bad, and if you place yourself in danger you will perish. Do not lead your fellow creatures astray, for whoever serves Satan will share his fate in hell. Let us rather serve God and obey His commandments, so that we may become worthy to be counted among the band of the elect. Amen.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

Charity for Charity.

"Thy faith hath made thee whole."—Luke xviii. 42.

SYNOPSIS.—We may expect from God's justice an amount of attention in proportion to that which we give to His service. The Ninevites. Dives. Charity for charity. If people forget God, can they complain if God seems to forget them? Be zealous in His service and He will be zealous in providing for you.

The coat-of-arms of one of the Roman emperors contained an eagle which held in the one claw a crown and in the other a sword with the inscription: I bestow either. It was desired to express thereby that his subjects might expect reward or punishment according to their deserts. In a like manner God deals with us: He treats us as we treat Him. Let us make this truth to-day the subject of our consideration.

St. Augustine tells us that God is cold toward the man whose love for Him is cold, but that He watches with an ardent love the man who serves Him with a fervent heart. Holy Scripture gives us many examples of this truth. The inhabitants of Ninive had become unfaithful to God, and all, high and low, men and women, were addicted to sin. To punish them for their wickedness God allowed the destruction of the city to be announced through the prophet Jonas, "Yet forty days," he cried, "and Ninive shall be destroyed" (Jonas iii. 4). Yet Ninive was not destroyed. And why not? Can God, like man, alter his mind? St. Jerome answers: Because Ninive was converted, and because the inhabitants repented of their sins and amended their lives, God forgave them. Therefore, just as the inhabitants of Ninive treated God, so God treated them in return. When the rich man Dives in torments lifted his eyes and saw Abraham in heaven and Lazarus in his bosom he cried: "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his fingers in water, to cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame. And Abraham said to him: Son, remember, that thou didst receive good things in thy lifetime, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted and thou art tormented" (Luke xvi. 23, 24). But why did Abraham refuse to grant this little

request? St. Chrysostom answers: "He did not deserve a drop of water, because he had no mercy with Lazarus, to whom he had refused to give the crumbs that fell from his table; had he given to Lazarus it would have been given unto him."

Take warning, you who are avaricious and hardhearted, who are not moved with compassion at the sight of the afflicted and miserable; who have a deaf ear to the petitions of the poor; who turn away from your doors with cruel words the suffering and afflicted: the just God will treat you as you treat those suffering brethren. To-day or to-morrow it may be you who is suffering and then there will be no one to help or assist you. And, when finally you appear before the judgment seat of God, no mercy will be meted out to you. "A sentence without mercy," says St. James, "will be passed on those who have shown no mercy."

Many people complain that they are continually suffering, and that God seems to have entirely forgotten them. These people do not consider that not only do they fully deserve the trials and adversities that visit them, but a good deal more. God is not unjust; He treats us as we treat Him. People forget God; they live as if there was no God, no hell, no heaven, no reward, no punishment; they neglect prayer and divine service; rarely do they receive the Sacraments: without hesitation they break the commandments of God; they persevere in sin without repenting; is it to be wondered then if God also seems to forget them, and does not assist them in their troubles? He does not stretch forth His helping hand because they have been unfaithful.

At the time when David sent his army against his son Absalom he commanded those in charge not to kill Absalom. "Save me the boy Absalom" (II Kings xviii. 5). Why, asks St. Ambrose, did David call Absalom "boy" instead of "son"? And he answers: He was called so because he endeavored to take his father's life, and therefore was not worthy to be called son. If you oppose God, if through your sins you wage warfare against Him, if you dishonor and disgrace His name, can He remain to you a kindly father? If you addict yourselves to vice and commit sin after sin, can He be expected, in spite of all this, to bless you and to heap favors upon you? Will he not rather be induced to take the scourge and to give you due punishment? Can you complain if this happens? Indeed not, for you only receive what you deserve.

If, on the contrary, we keep the commandments of God, if we have a proper hatred for sin, place our hope in Him, pray to Him and serve Him faithfully, then He will treat us as we deserve to be treated, He will bless us with what we need and give us peace of heart; and if, in order to test us and to give us opportunity to gain greater glory in heaven, He will send sufferings and trials, He will also give us the grace and patience to bear them. God treats us as we treat Him. "To the loving," says St. Bernard, "He is loving, to the negligent, negligent, and to the zealous, zealous."

Take this to heart, my brethren. Let us henceforth not complain when tribulations are meted out to us. If we look back on our past life and consider the many sins committed by us we will find no good reason to complain. If in our blindness we have murmured against the just God, let us cry out with the blind man in to-day's gospel: "Lord, that I may see!" Open my eyes, that I may acknowledge Thy justice, and teach me to do Thy holy will! If we conduct ourselves in the future like good and obedient children we may be sure that God will treat us like a loving father. Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT.

The Acceptable Time.

"Then Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert."—Matt. iv. 1.

SYNOPSIS.—Lent is: (1) the acceptable time in which we may particularly be heard by God; (2) the time in which the divine Saviour particularly helps us to gain our salvation.

I. Fasting particularly pleasing to God. Example: Ninive, Moses, Nehemias, David.

II. Lent the time in which are commemorated the Passion and death of Our Lord, by which He worked the salvation of mankind. He will during this time give us his particular help to work out our own salvation.

Dear Brethren: Lent is, as to-day's epistle says, the acceptable time in which God wants us to do penance, so that He may hear and help us. I will briefly show you that Lent is (1) the acceptable time in which we may particularly be heard by God, and (2) the time in which our divine Saviour helps us particularly to gain our salvation. May the Lord give His blessing to my words!

I. The Lord said to Isaias: "In an acceptable time I have heard thee" (Is. xlix. 8). What is this acceptable time? It is Lent. Although God did not specify a particular time for the forgiveness of sins, and although the well-spring of His mercy is ever open to sinners, still the forty days of fast are a blessed time, in which He is especially anxious to accept prayers and repentance. As a proof of this fact, let me remind you of the city of Ninive. God spared not Sodom and Gomorrha, because the inhabitants refused to do penance; it was different at Ninive. When Jonas entered into the city and cried, "Yet forty days and Ninive shall be destroyed" (Jonas iii. 4), the king proclaimed a general fast. "And God saw their works, that they were turned from their evil way: and God had mercy with regard to the evil which he had said that he would do to them, and he did it not" (Jonas iii. 10).

Again, why did the offended God pardon the Israelites when they had adored a golden calf? Because Moses fasted forty days on behalf of the people (Deut. vi. 18). And who came to the assistance of the Jews at Jerusalem, when by their many sins and vices they were suffering the wrath of God, and were in danger of

destruction? It was Nehemias, who fasted many days and prayed before the face of the God of heaven (II. Esd. i). David fasted to obtain forgiveness of his sins. We read in his writings, "I humbled my soul with fasting" (Ps. xxxiv. 13). If, therefore, the Lord, in the Old Testament, pardoned repentant sinners particularly at the time of their fasting, will this time of Lent, instituted in the New Testament and sanctified by the fasting of His only begotten Son, be less pleasing to God? Sinners may therefore hope for pardon of their sins, particularly during this time of grace. There is no doubt but that the repentant sinner will receive it, for the Son of God during this time gives the sinner His particular assistance to repent of his sins and to become reconciled to His heavenly Father.

II. The Lord said to Isaias: "In the day of salvation I have helped thee." Which are these days of salvation? What is this help? My Christians, what is it that the Church, during this holy time of Lent, puts constantly before our eyes? Is it not the Passion and death of Jesus Christ? Christ, by His Passion and death, wrought our salvation, and if during Lent we meditate on His Passion and death with a devout and contrite heart, and if by self-denial and mortification we strive to become like Him, then these days will be days of salvation for us. The Son of God helps us, with His grace, to save our souls.

Behold, O sinner, your Saviour hanging on the Cross!—His head bowed, His arms extended, His side open. His head is bowed to give you the kiss of peace, His arms are extended to receive you, His side is open to show you His loving heart. Must this image not induce you to turn from the ways of sin? Should such a cordial invitation not be powerful enough to make any heart receive Him with a similar love?

You may say, with Cain: "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon" (Gen. iv. 13). But dare you despair of God's mercy when He offers you His hand and cordially invites you? Even while hanging on the Cross Jesus said: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke xxiii. 34). Do not delay your conversion!

How shall I be able, you may say, to make atonement to God for all my sins? God will assist you and grant you grace to render satisfaction, whereby all your works will become meritorious if performed with a good intention. During this holy time the Church asks you

to fast, and exhorts you to prayer, to almsgiving and to other good works. If you fast, you will fast with Christ. If you mortify your body, you will take part in Christ's Passion. And if you perform other good works, Christ will help you in performing them. Our Lord has said: "As the branch can not bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing" (John xv. 4,5). For this reason St. Paul exclaimed: "I live, no, not I; but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). And if Christ Himself helps you perform all these works, how can they fail to render satisfaction for your sins?

Do not despair of God's mercy. An evidence of His forbearance, goodness and mercy is that He has let you live to see this blessed time. Behold, this is the acceptable time, in which God hears you if you call on Him; these are the days of salvation, in which God Himself helps you to save your soul. Oh, I beg of you, do not delay your conversion. This may be the last Lent that you will live to see! Take advantage of it, repent sincerely of your sins and cleanse your hearts by a worthy reception of the Sacraments. Christ will then most surely help you to mend your ways and lead you to eternal salvation. **Amen.**

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.

Examination of Conscience.

"His garments became white as snow."—Matt. xvii. 2.

SYNOPSIS.—The white garment of Christ likened to the garment of sanctifying grace bestowed upon the soul in Baptism. This garment, when lost, may be recovered in the Sacrament of Penance. Examination of conscience an important part of this Sacrament. Often imperfectly done. Some points to be observed. Daily examination of conscience recommended.

When reading of the glorious and spotless garment with which Our Lord was clothed at His transfiguration on Mount Thabor, I am reminded of the precious garment of sanctifying grace with which our soul becomes adorned in the Sacrament of Baptism. Adorned with this garment the soul is an object of delight to God and to His heavenly hosts. Unfortunately this precious adornment of the soul lasts but a short time with many people. In the many temptations and dangers of this miserable life this garment of innocence is lost, often very soon, and the soul becomes disfigured by sin, detestable in the sight of God, and deserving of eternal damnation. Our Saviour, in His great love and mercy, instituted the Sacrament of Penance as a means of regaining sanctifying grace when it has been lost, and the Church in this holy time of Lent exhorts her children to cleanse their souls in this Sacrament and to reconcile themselves with God. To receive this Sacrament worthily it is necessary, above all, that we should know our sins; for, without knowing them, we can neither repent nor confess them, nor can we amend our lives. Since there are many Christians who, when going to Confession, examine their conscience imperfectly and insufficiently, I wish to speak to you to-day on the proper examination of conscience.

It is just as *difficult,* as it is *necessary* that we should know ourself and our sins, our bad habits and inclinations. It is difficult, because self-love often blinds us so that we are inclined to see only our good qualities and to excuse our sins, our serious violations of God's holy laws, as weaknesses; it is difficult also because it is not pleasant to confess our sins, particularly our favorite sins. It is, however, necessary, because without knowing ourself we can not

repent of our sins, we fail to combat our wicked inclinations, and we can not lay aside our bad habits; it is necessary because the Sacrament of Penance is received unworthily if through a careless examination of conscience a mortal sin is omitted in Confession.

What is to be said of those who devote only a few minutes to the examination of conscience? Can they in this short time get a good knowledge of the sins they have committed? This is simply impossible, particularly if one has not been to Confession for a considerable time. One will then overlook mortal sins, and will confess only those that happen to come to the mind. The consequence is that there is danger of an incomplete confession, and hence of a worthless one.

There are people who expect the confessor to help them examine their consciences. This, however, is not the task of the confessor, but of the penitent; the penitent must carefully examine his conscience, and repent of his sins, before entering the confessional.

Then there are some who examine their conscience carefully, but do not consider the duties of their state of life. A certain emperor, Charles V., on one of his travels through his realm, desired to go to Confession and his usual confessor not being with him he went to the first church he came to and asked for a priest to hear his confession. After he had confessed, the priest, without being awed by the person of the mighty emperor, said: "My lord, you have confessed the sins of Charles, but not the sins of the emperor. Have you insisted on the honesty of your officials? Have you protected your subjects and provided for their welfare? Have you responded to the pleadings of the poor? Have you rewarded the good and punished the wicked? Have you sheltered widows and orphans and afforded them help?" The emperor became perplexed, he examined his conscience more carefully, and made a complete confession, after which he said to his companions: "To-day I have learned how to examine my conscience and how to make a sincere confession."

Let this be an example to you. Examine your conscience more carefully in future, think of the duties of your state of life and ask yourself whether you have fulfilled or neglected them.

Parents must examine themselves whether they have raised their children in virtue and in the teachings of the Lord, if they have advised and corrected them, punished them if necessary, if they have set them a good example, watched over their

doings in and out of doors and encouraged them to do good. Children must ask themselves whether they have loved and obeyed their parents or offended them by bad behavior. Masters must mind the words of St. Paul: "If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (I. Tim. v. 8). They must examine their conscience whether they have encouraged their servants to do good and hindered them from doing wrong, whether they gave them proper food and treated them kindly. Servants and employees must ask themselves whether they have properly attended to the affairs of their masters and served them faithfully. If you are married people ask yourselves whether you have been patient with one another and encouraged each other to do good. In short, whatever your state of life, do not forget, when examining your conscience, to ask yourself whether you have fulfilled or neglected the duties which your particular state demands.

Examine your conscience carefully in future. Consider that the fruit of the worthy reception of the Sacraments, the amendment of life, and the eternal salvation of your soul, may depend upon this examination. Do not be satisfied with examining your conscience when preparing for Confession, examine it every evening. St. Thomas à Kempis advises to make good resolutions in the morning, and to find out at night whether these resolutions have been kept. A daily examination of conscience will make the examination before Confession at once easy and perfect, will enable you to receive more worthily this precious Sacrament of Penance, and, by bringing you greater graces, will more surely aid you in attaining your eternal salvation.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.

Relapse Into Sin.

"And the last state of that man becomes worse than the first."—Luke xi. 26.

SYNOPSIS.—Promises to amend, made in the Confessional, often forgotten soon after leaving it. Relapses into sin the result. These relapses make conversion more difficult, and invite the wrath of God. Example, the traders in the Temple.

In ancient times there lived in Carthage a king by the name of Hanno. His self love and vanity made him desirous of having people believe that he was not an ordinary man, but a god. To further this belief he caused a great number of parrots, magpies and kindred birds to be caught and to be taught to say, prettily: Hanno is a god. After they had learned their lesson they were allowed their freedom, the king hoping that they would proclaim in all parts of the country: Hanno is a god. But, behold, as soon as they had regained their freedom and returned to their haunts, they resumed their own old cackling, all forgetful of what they had learned. Alas! so many Christians are like these birds. They can be made to say in the confessional, in nice words, that they will amend their lives and serve God. But just as soon as they leave the church and meet their former companions they forget all about their promises. The evil spirit, who in the Sacrament of Penance was ejected from their hearts, is striving to return, and, alas! succeeds only too soon. And then the last state of that man becomes worse than the first: for the repeated fall into sin makes conversion more difficult and the punishment of God more sure. Let us consider to-day why this is so.

(1). When one has a relapse into the same serious disease of which he has just been cured, his recovery becomes more difficult, sometimes impossible. The same is the case with the sinner, if he, when cured from sin in the Sacrament of Penance, falls back into the same sins. The diseased state of his soul becomes more dangerous and his amendment more difficult; his sin becomes a habit and he can not tear himself away from it. In the words of Solomon, "Just as a threefold cord is not easily broken" (Eccl. iv. 12), so the entangled mesh of bad habits is not easily broken; for bad habits

finally become second nature and a necessity to the sinner. You all have seen this. You may have seen a drunkard, slanderer, or thief, promise to amend his life, but how rarely have they ever done so! Why have they failed? Because they had contracted a habit that they could not break. Therefore the prophet Jeremias says: "If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots: you also may do well, when you have learned evil" (Jer. xiii. 24). Many youths and maidens become addicted to sin, and grow old in it, finding every day that this habit holds them tighter and tighter, and in them are fulfilled the words of pious Job: "His bones shall be filled with the vices of his youth, and they shall sleep with him in the dust" (xx. 11). And what is the result? Solomon answers: "The wicked man when he is come into the depth of his sins, contemneth" (Prov. xviii. 3). The more sin becomes a habit with man, the more indifferent he will become; he commits sin and minds it not; he offends God and thinks nothing of it; he no longer thinks of heaven, which he has lost through sin, nor of hell, which is his fate; he disregards good advice and despises every summons to do penance; and "his heart shall be as hard as a stone, and as firm as a smith's anvil" (Job. xli. 15). Alas! the last state of the man who repeatedly falls back into his old sins becomes worse than the first and there is danger that he will die in his sins.

(2). God will not be ridiculed. If a sinner continually promises that he will amend his life, and never keeps his promise, he is ridiculing God and will not go unpunished. Our Saviour intimates this when he said to the man sick for thirty-eight years: "Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee" (John v. 14). Holy Scripture contains many examples, from which it is made clear that God has severely punished those that have broken their oft repeated promises, and that He has even allowed them to die in their sins. We read that our Saviour twice reprimanded the Jews who desecrated the temple of Jerusalem by trading and that He punished them in a different manner on these occasions. The first time when He went into the temple of Jerusalem, "He cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the chairs of them that sold doves; and he said to them: "It is written, my house shall be called the house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves" (Matt. xxi. 12, 13). But when he came upon

these desecrators a second time, "He made as it were, a scourge of little cords and drove them out of the temple" (John ii. 14). This action of the Saviour is particularly noteworthy because there is no other instance related where our Saviour inflicted such punishment. St. Augustine says he punished the Jews so severely, and drove them out of the temple with a scourge, because after having been reprimanded for this offense they committed the same again.

What then do we deserve, who, not only once but many times, promise amendment, and yet, again and again, fall back into the same old sins? What punishment will be meted out to us if we, in Confession, promise to amend our lives, sealing this promise by the reception of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, and a few days, or perhaps hours, afterward, again commit the same sins? We should have no reason to complain if the just God visited upon us temporal punishment; we could not even complain if He left us to die in our sins, to be cast into the eternal fire.

We have now seen that repeated relapses into old sins make conversion and amendment difficult, and that they put us in danger of being severely punished by God. Let us take this to heart. Let us strive, while there is yet time, to thoroughly cleanse our hearts from sin. Let us avoid the relapse into sin, that we may not invite upon us the wrath of God. "In doing good let us not fail. For in due time we shall reap, not failing" (Gal. vi. 9). Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT.

The Lord's Example.

"Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?"—John vi. 5.

SYNOPSIS.—The Lord's action in the miracle related to-day a warning to us to protect ourselves against want: (1) by our own efforts; (2) by asking God's blessing; (3) by rendering thanks for God's gifts; (4) by sharing with the poor.

A sad question this, if asked by a father of a family, or by a poor widow. Hard times will come, the necessities of life are expensive, there is sometimes no work to be had; whence shall they buy bread that they all may eat? Console yourselves, my Christians! You are told in to-day's gospel that the Saviour Himself put this question to His apostles, when it seemed to them impossible to provide bread for so many thousands. And, behold, He increased the five barley loaves that were at hand, so that not only all had sufficient, but there were twelve baskets filled with the fragments that remained. This is a lesson to us as to what we should do when in want. There are especially four points in this miracle of the loaves which deserve our attention.

(1). The Saviour took the bread into His own hands, indicating thereby that we must make some efforts to earn our bread by the work of our hands. David says: "Thou shalt eat the labors of thy hands: blessed art thou, and it shall be well with thee" (Ps. cxxvii. 2), and Solomon tells us: "He that tilleth his ground, shall be filled with bread: but he that followeth idleness shall be filled with poverty" (Prov. xxviii. 19). Examples of this you may see every day. Through application and industry many people become prosperous, while laziness and indolence cause other families to lose their whole fortune. The first condition, therefore, to secure bread, or temporal welfare, is industry and activity.

(2). After He had taken the bread, Christ lifted His eyes toward heaven, and thereby taught us that before our own efforts we should lift our hands and eyes to heaven and ask God's blessing for our success. Especially if our work is not successful, if all labor seems in vain, should we lift our eyes to heaven and confidently place

our hope in God; who will surely help us. When King Josaphat did this, as he was hard pressed by his enemies, God saved him. The poor widow who had nothing left in the house but a jug of oil had recourse to God, and related her need to the prophet Eliseus, and in answer to her prayer the oil was wonderfully increased, so that she could not procure jugs enough to hold it all. She was able to sell of it enough to pay her debts and to support herself and her sons. No one who has recourse to God will remain unheard. Therefore Holy Scripture exhorts: "Cast thy care upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee" (Ps. liv. 23).

(3). Christ thanked His heavenly Father and blessed the bread. The blessing of God is necessary to us. Our heavenly Father overwhelms us daily with graces and favors. He gives nourishment for our body, strengthens us and gives us health. He blesses our fields, so that the harvest fills the barns and increases our prosperity. He protects our houses, blesses our work and guards us against many adversities. "Who hath wrought and done these things? I, the Lord" (Is. xli. 4). "Lord, thou hast wrought all our works for us" (Is. xxvi. 12). No matter how much we exert ourselves we may only plant and water, but God gives the harvest. Should we therefore not daily give thanks to the Lord, and should we not before using His gifts remember the Giver? It is the custom of a good Christian, morning and evening, before and after meals, to thank God for His favors and ask Him to let their use be a blessing. If we carelessly neglect this prayer, if we receive gifts without thinking of the Giver, if we even misuse these gifts to offend Him, how can we hope for further blessing? And if the blessing sometimes is wanting, if our undertakings are unsuccessful, if need and want oppress us, may not all this be due to the fact that we have neglected to give due thanks to God for the favors previously conferred upon us? Can we complain that God abandons us when we do not thank Him, when we enjoy His gifts without thinking of the Giver?

(4). After breaking the bread Christ distributed it among the people. And we must not fail to do likewise if we wish to be blessed by God. "Deal thy bread to the hungry," advises the prophet Isaias (lviii. 7). He does not say *give* thy bread to the hungry, but *deal* thy bread to the hungry. We are not asked to give all our goods to the poor, but to give them a part. If we do this we may rest assured

that God will not let us want. Therefore St. Paul says: "He who soweth sparingly, shall also reap sparingly: and he who soweth in blessings, shall also reap blessings. And he that ministereth seed to the sower, will both give you bread to eat, and will multiply your seed, and increase the growth of the fruits of your justice" (II. Cor. ix. 6, 10). St. Basil writes in explanation of these words: "Just as the seed which is sown bears fruit a hundredfold, so shall the alms given to the poor. If you have but one loaf of bread and a poor man should ask for an alms, share it with him and say: Of the little I have I give to my brother, because you, O Lord, will not abandon me in my need." The little you give to your hungry brother will be as seed and bear fruit a hundredfold.

Tobias said to his son: "Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person: for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee. According to thy ability be merciful. If thou have much give abundantly: if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little" (Tobias iv. 7-9).

The example of the Lord, therefore, shows us what to do, in order that we may not want. Let us begin, perform, and end our work with prayer; let us be thankful to the Lord for every gift; be careful not to misuse His gifts to offend Him; share your bread with the poor; give and you will receive. Then you may expect to be happy in this and the future life. Amen.

PASSION SUNDAY.

The Evil of Sin.

SYNOPSIS.—Mortal sin a great evil. It robs the soul of all merits that have been gained for heaven. No matter what great piety and grace a soul has possessed, or how long a soul has lived a life of grace, one mortal sin deprives the soul of all merits thus laboriously gained. Sin not only deprives but corrupts. If in sin do not hesitate to cleanse your hearts in the Sacrament of Penance, especially now, in paschal time.

In to-day's gospel our Saviour reveals His loathing and aversion for sin. "Which of you," he asks, "shall convince me of sin?" Sin, so much abhorred by our Saviour, we, alas, very often make little of. To-day, therefore, I will try to show you how great an evil sin, especially mortal sin, is, hoping that you will be moved to avoid it in future.

Mortal sin is so great an evil because it is detrimental to man. It robs him, first of all, of sanctifying grace, that most beautiful and most precious adornment of the soul, and, consequently, of supernatural life, without which the soul is dead to God; when sin enters the soul, grace departs. "If the just man," says the prophet Ezechiel, "turn himself away from his justice, and do iniquity. . . . all his justices which he hath done, shall not be remembered." If one, by leading a just life, has obtained so many graces as to be a saint, and he turns back to the ways of sin, all graces and merits which he had gathered are cancelled; "all his justices which he hath done, shall not be remembered." Of what profit was it to Judas, for instance, to have been pious for a short time? Because he did not persevere to the end in virtue and grace, any merits that he may have gained formerly were of no avail to him. If one should lead a holy life for thirty, forty, or more years, and at the end of this time commit one mortal sin and remain impenitent, all his former piety would not help him to life everlasting; and should he die in the state of mortal sin, his soul would be lost. You may keep rigid fasts, lead a life of mortification, pray incessantly, live temperately, and do this for many years, and yet one single mortal sin will deprive you of all merits gained in all these years; just like a merchant who in his vessel crosses the ocean and collects a valuable cargo at various ports, and, when about to enter the home port, suffers shipwreck and loses all.

It is sad for such a merchant to lose all he possesses; it is a great calamity if a hailstorm destroys the crops, the only hope of the farmer; it is a terrible thing if fire deprives families of hearth and home; mortal sin, however, causes even greater desolation and more terrible damage to the soul; it ruins and destroys all those precious treasures and merits so laboriously gained; it is "the enemy, who hath put out his hand to all her desirable things" (Lamentations i. 10); sin renders the soul absolutely destitute because robbed of sanctifying grace, of the friendship of God, and of all virtues and graces which had become the soul's adornment through sanctifying grace. "If the just man turn himself away from his justice, and do iniquity. . . . all his justices which he hath done, shall not be remembered."

Sin not only makes man poor, but also wicked. When our Saviour wished to show His apostles the terrible abyss of wickedness into which Judas, by betraying and selling his divine Master, had cast himself, He said to them: "One of you is a devil. Now He meant Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon: for this same was about to betray Him" (John vi. 71, 72). He wished to say, My beloved, you have learned from my teachings the inexpressible harm sin does to man, because thereby he loses all that was good in him; you have learned that the sinner is despised by heaven and cursed by earth; but now I say more: sin is so pernicious a poison that it transforms man into a devil, and such he who has resolved to deliver me into the hands of my enemy for 30 shekels has made of himself. "One of you is a devil." St. Chrysostom says: "He who unites himself with God is one in spirit with Him, and he who binds himself to the devil, becomes like the devil."

Have you ever considered all this when you committed a mortal sin? Have you ever considered that by committing a mortal sin you forfeit sanctifying grace, rob the soul of all merits, surrender yourself to the devil, in fact become a devil, and lose all claim to heaven? You may have sinned often and grievously, and probably never properly thought of the tremendous harm inflicted upon the soul through sin. Youth and maiden do not always think of this harm when tempted to sell their innocence and purity of heart for a moment's sinful pleasure. The cheat and miser do not think of it when they sell their souls for gold. Liars and slanderers, who rob their fellow men of honor and good name, do not remember the terrible consequence of this sin for their own souls.

What must you do, if through sin you have forfeited sanctifying grace, lost the treasures and merits of the soul, and have become an object of horror and detestation in the eyes of God? Should you say with Cain: "My iniquity is greater, that I may deserve pardon." No, my Christians, we have a remedy, whereby reparation can be made, and this remedy is found in the Sacrament of Penance. We read in the life of St. Aegidius, that when it had been made known to him through a divine revelation that a certain king of France had hitherto been concealing a sin, he went to see him and exhorted him to penance, so that the king confessed his sin. It was then revealed to the saint that his prayer had been heard and the king's sins had been forgiven.

Paschal time has come and the commandment of the Church requires all Christians to cleanse their hearts from sin in the Sacrament of Penance. I therefore earnestly exhort you to obey the commandment of the Church, to examine your conscience, repent of your sins and confess them. Then you may rest assured that God will give back to you His sanctifying grace, that He will cure your souls and confer upon you the privilege of everlasting happiness. Amen.

PALM SUNDAY.

Lo, the Lord Cometh to Thee.

SYNOPSIS.—Jesus went to the people of Jerusalem, although He knew that a few days later they would clamor for His death. So does He come to us, although we make Him suffer by our sins. Confession the great spring of grace in which we may cleanse our hearts to make them worthy of the reception of Our Lord in Holy Communion.

The hour of suffering and death had come at last, and Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time, and allowed the people to do homage to Him as the Messias. Then were fulfilled the words of the prophet: "Tell ye the daughter of Sion: Behold thy king cometh to thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass." Though He knew that His enemies sought to kill Him; in spite of the fact that it was known to Him that the same multitudes now crying: "Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest!" would only a few days later shout "Crucify Him! crucify Him!" in spite of all that He entered Jerusalem as the King of Peace and took compassion on the people. And the same Jesus is anxious, especially in these blessed days of the Paschal time, to enter our hearts and give us His peace, notwithstanding the fact that we, too, by committing sin, have had a share in the crucifixion. We are commanded by the Church to purify our hearts from sin during paschal time and to receive the Lord in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. The commandment of the Church bids you to confess and to receive Holy Eucharist at least once a year, at Easter time. This does not mean that it is the wish of the Church that we should not also receive the Sacraments frequently during the year. Many Christians, unfortunately, content themselves with receiving the Sacraments only at Easter time, and never during the rest of the year think of purifying their heart from sin and of approaching the table of the Lord. And yet all these indifferent and indolent Christians expect to be saved. I tell you that the frequent reception of the Sacraments is a mark of belonging to the chosen of God.

To Confession we may apply the words of the Lord: "There is a shame that bringeth sin and there is a shame that bringeth glory and grace" (Eccl. iv. 25). And of Holy Communion Christ has

said: "This is the bread which cometh down from heaven: that if any man eat of it, he may not die. If any man eat of this bread he shall live forever" (John vi. 50, 52). The frequent, worthy reception of these Sacraments is, therefore, a sign of grace and life.

If a distinguished guest is expected for a visit, or if a feast is to be celebrated, great efforts are usually made to clean the house thoroughly and to adorn it in the best possible manner; if a house is left uncleaned for any length of time, it is in no condition to receive a distinguished guest, or to have a feast there celebrated. So it is with the heart; and Christ, the sublime King of kings, will not come to your heart if you do not cleanse it from the filth of sin. Are you depending upon a deathbed repentance? St. Gregory of Tours relates that in France there lived a certain boy who led so pious and holy a life that he was considered a saint. Out of reverence for him, his living apartment was not used for a long time after his death. In the meantime dust and filth gathered there and one day this boy appeared to the servant of the house and bade him clean the room. Now if this saintly boy, one of the elect, would not tolerate dust and filth to gather in a place where the Lord had spent so many hours with him, how improper is the negligence of those who are unconcerned for the filth in their hearts, which should be the dwelling of God, or who postpone a cleansing from sin to the hour of death! This carelessness is not only improper, but it is to be feared that such careless and indifferent Christians will not obtain the grace necessary for their conversion, and that they will not enter into the glory of God. Of all the lepers in Israel none was cleansed but Naaman the Syrian, because he obeyed the command to go and wash himself in the Jordan, and we shall not be cleansed from the leprosy of sin unless we purify our hearts at the spring of grace offered us in the Holy Sacraments.

Regarding Holy Communion it must be evident that we cannot be friends of Christ unless we receive Him into our hearts. How can we succeed in conquering the inordinate desires and sinful inclinations that beset us almost daily, when we approach the Sacraments but once a year? If we so seldom partake of the bread of life, it is a matter of course that we are often open to temptations and to the danger of committing sin, and that we find ourselves often in the state of sin. If we approach the Sacraments often during the year, we shall gain the strength to overcome our inordinate desires and inclinations, to exterminate our bad habits and to persevere in

virtue, and after such a life, when the hour of death comes, we may hope for life everlasting. "If one has been wounded," says St. Ambrose, "he seeks to be cured; our wound is sin, the remedy is the most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist." "As the branch," says our Saviour, "cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing. If any one abide not in me, he shall be cast forth as a branch, and shall wither, and they shall gather him up, and cast him into the fire, and he burneth" (John xv. 4-6).

Therefore, my dear brethren, do not be content with receiving Our Lord into your hearts only during paschal time, but receive Him oftener. "Many Christians," says St. Augustine, "are damned, because they seldom or never went to Confession. As often as you go to Confession you arise from death to life, from sin to grace, and consequently to eternal life." And St. Rupert says: "Whoever is wanting of this heavenly bread, is weak and death overtakes him." But those who often partake of this heavenly bread are immortal and they will be counted among the band of the elect, in heaven where peace eternal reigns. Amen.

EASTER.

It Is Not Now as Yesterday.

"He is risen, he is not here."—Mark xvi. 6.

SYNOPSIS.—"It is not now as yesterday" an ancient saying, found repeatedly in the Bible. The change in the Church this morning from its appearance during Holy Week. What does the change mean? Take part in the Resurrection of Christ by a resurrection of your souls from sin to a life of grace, so that you also may exclaim, "It is not now as yesterday."

In ancient times whenever some great change in persons or things occurred, people used to say: "It is not now as yesterday and the day before." Thus we read in the Bible that Jacob said to his wives, Lia and Rachel: "I see your father's countenance is not towards me as yesterday and the other day" (Gen. xxxi. 5), and Jonathan called out to his companions: "Let us arise and fight against our enemies: for it is not now as yesterday and the day before" (I. Mach. ix. 44). If we look about us this day we also must say: "It is not now as yesterday and the day before." A great change has taken place, a change for the better. Let us contemplate this change, and may the Lord grant us His grace.

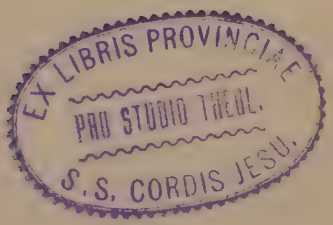
Behold the change in this church. "It is not now as yesterday and the day before." Yesterday and the day before the altar was deprived of its adornments, the blessed Sacrament had been removed from the tabernacle, the pictures of our Saviour were veiled, everywhere we saw the marks of sorrow; the bells ceased to ring, we did not hear the accustomed organ peals, and truly might the words of the prophet Jeremias have been applied: "The ways of Sion mourn, because there are none that come to the solemn feast: all her gates are broken down: her priests sigh: her virgins are in affliction, and she is oppressed with bitterness" (Lam. i. 4). To-day, however, it is not as yesterday and the day before, the Church, like Judith, has "taken off her haircloth, and adorned herself with all her ornaments" (Judith x. 3). The chimes are again ringing and the joyful alleluia will not cease. Even the people put on their best attire and in Christian homes this day is celebrated in an especial manner. Let us in spirit go to Jerusalem, the Jewish capital. It is not now as yesterday and the day before. Then there

was darkness all over the place. "And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in two, from the top even to the bottom, the earth quaked, the rocks were rent, the graves were opened: and many bodies of the saints, that had slept, arose" (Matt. xxvii. 51, 52). To-day all fear, all sorrow has vanished; nature seems more beautiful, joy and exultation reign among the faithful: for Christ, the Creator of all things, He is verily risen from the dead. Let us go outside the city gates to visit the grave in which the body of Christ had been laid. Even here is it not now as yesterday and the day before. Yesterday and the day before the body of Christ was here, wrapt in clean linen cloth, placed in the sepulchre: but this holy Body is here no longer; instead we meet a youth clothed with a white robe sitting on the brink. But we do not seek this young man, we seek Christ. The angel at the grave, however, tells us: "He is risen, he is not here." Let us ask him about the Lord. He answers: "It is not now as yesterday and the day before; yesterday and the day before we mourned because of the sorrowful death of Our Lord and God; to-day, however, we rejoice for He is risen from the dead. Go to Galilee; there you shall see Him. Yesterday and the day before He was covered with wounds, disfigured by blood and bruises, to-day we see Him glorified and transfigured, a glorious and majestic figure, immortal and holy." Indeed, it is not now as yesterday and the day before; all is new and has changed for the better.

It is but just, therefore, that we also be transformed in spirit, and that our souls be attired with a glorious garment. Fields and meadows, gardens and forests seem to shine in new splendor; how then dare we remain idle? "As Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father," exclaims the apostle, "so we also may walk in newness of life" (Rom. vi. 14), and again: "Be renewed in the spirit of your mind: and put on the new man, who according to God is created in justice and holiness of truth" (Eph. iv. 23, 24). In order to walk in the newness of life, all filth of sin and vice must be removed, you must clothe yourself in justice and holiness of truth and keep the commandments of God. This, as St. Paul says, is the only sign by which we may know we have truly risen from the grave of sin. "It is not enough," says St. Paul, "that we repent and confess our sins only, and to all appearances are converted, but it is required that we lead a new life, avoiding sin and its occasion, and keeping the commandments of God." Christ, says St. Thomas of Villanova, intimated this, when, after His resurrec-

tion, He appeared to Mary Magdalen in the guise of a gardener. In the spring time the gardener trims his garden, removes weeds and plants useful vegetables and beautiful flowers. Christ appeared to Mary Magdalen in the guise of a gardener, to indicate that we must tend the garden of our hearts by removing the weeds of sin and bad habits, and that we must cultivate the seed of virtue, in other words, start upon a new life.

Let us heed the warning of Our Lord. Do not be content to repent and confess your sins and promise amendment, at your Easter confession, but strive to keep your promise. Avoid sin, avoid the occasion of sin, purify your hearts from bad habits and strive to walk in the newness of life, so that the change in your hearts from sin to grace may make you joyfully exclaim: "It is not now as yesterday!" Even as Christ has risen from the dead to the glory of heaven so let us rise from the grave of sin and lead a new life so that the Resurrection of Christ may lead us to life everlasting. Amen.



LOW SUNDAY.

Profit by the Example of the Failings of the Just.

"Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe."—John xx. 25.

SYNOPSIS.—Holy Scripture records the failings of the just for three reasons: 1. That God's mercy be praised. 2. That we may not depend on our own virtue and strength. 3. That we may follow their example and do penance when we have fallen into sin. Examples: St. Thomas, St. Paul, St. Peter, David, St. Mary Magdalen.

St. Augustine calls Holy Scripture a beautiful mirror, that flatters no one, but sets forth the genuine truth. There we find recognition of the good which is found even in the greatest sinner, and censure of the defects in even the just man. We have an example of this fact in to-day's gospel. St. Thomas would not believe that Christ had risen from the dead, although his brother apostles assured him that they had seen the Lord. "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe." Why does Holy Scripture tell us of this strange failing in an otherwise saintly man, who later expiated this fault by the sincerest penance? It is done (1) that God's mercy be praised, (2) that no one may depend on his own faculties, and (3) that we may follow the example of this saint and do penance when we have been at fault.

1. Holy Scripture tells us of the failings of the just so that the mercy of God, which has sought out the erring sheep and brought them back to the true fold, may be praised. For this reason the saints did not try to conceal misdeeds of which they had been guilty, being of the opinion that through their being saved from the consequences of their failings the honor of God would be manifested before the world. St. Paul, for instance, writes: "A faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into this world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief. But for this cause have I obtained mercy; that in me first Christ Jesus might shew forth all patience, for the information of them that shall believe in him unto life everlasting" (I. Tim. i. 15, 16). And what sins had Paul com-

mitted? He says: "Who before was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and contumelious" (Ibid. xiii.). Again he says at another time: "Jesus was seen also by me, as by one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (I. Cor. xv. 8, 9). Neither did St. Augustine conceal the sins, errors and faults which he had committed before his conversion, but even put down their history in a book. He did this in order that the mercy of God which had been manifested in him, should be known and praised by the whole world.

2. Holy Scripture tells the defects of the saints, furthermore, that no one should rely entirely upon his own virtue and constancy. If even the saints fell, how can we expect to be secure from falling? Therefore, St. Paul advises: "He that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall" (I. Cor. x. 12). Holy Scripture puts before our eyes especially the denial of Peter and the stubborn unbelief of Thomas, that we may recognize the weakness and inconstancy of human nature, and that we dare not say with David: "I shall never be moved;" for hardly had he said this when he was forced to add: "O Lord, thou turnedst away thy face from me, and I became troubled" (Ps. xxix. 7, 8). So it was with Peter. Shortly before His Passion Christ had said to His apostles: "All you shall be scandalized in me this night" (Matt. xxvi. 31); and Peter had protested: "Although all shall be scandalized in thee, I will never be scandalized. Yea, though I should die with thee, I will not deny thee" (Ibid. xxxiii. 35). After such staunch assurance who would have believed that the love of Peter would quickly grow cold? But a few hours later when a maid asked him whether he was one of the disciples of Jesus, he timidly denied his beloved Lord and Master, not once, but three times. The apostle Thomas dearly loved the Saviour. This we know, because when the sisters of Lazarus sent a messenger to Jesus with the news that Lazarus had died, and he said to His apostles: "Let us go into Judea again," the disciples said to Him: "Rabbi, the Jews but now sought to stone thee: and goest thou thither again?" Thomas alone, wishing to encourage his brother apostles, exclaimed: "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John xi.). Who would have expected to see this courageous man seek flight with the others, when his beloved Master was made prisoner, and to find him a doubter when Christ had risen from the dead? Nevertheless it is so. Holy Scrip-

ture relates all this to us, so that we should not rely too much on our virtue and strength, but that we watch and pray so as not to fall into temptation and sin. Remember this, you, who say so confidently: I am old enough to know what I have to do; I shall be on my guard not to commit a sin. He who exposes himself to the danger of sin will perish, and he that thinketh himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall; for we are disposed to evil from childhood, as a consequence of original sin, and the very first temptation may cause the downfall of him who was confident that he would never offend almighty God.

3. Holy Scripture records the imperfections of saints, finally, that no one, after he has fallen, may despair, but that he should follow their example and rise from his fall a stronger and better man. "The knowledge of the falls of the saints," says St. Ambrose, "is even profitable: it has not harmed me, that Peter denied his Master; on the contrary, it has profited me that he repented." St. Augustine writes: "We are not given an example to fall, but to rise if we have fallen. The weak should not console themselves with the fall of the great, but the fall of the great should fill them with fear." Holy Scripture does not tell us of the unbelief of Thomas, that we may excuse our sins and faults, but that we may repent of them.

I will conclude with the words of St. Ambrose addressed to the Emperor Theodosius, who, having murdered many hundred inhabitants of the city of Salonica, consoled himself by remembering that David had also committed adultery and murder. The saint said to him: "Have you followed David in sin, follow him in penance." If you have followed Thomas in unbelief and doubt, if you have followed Peter in denying Christ, in inconstancy and timidity, if you have followed David in unchastity and voluptuousness, go and follow them in their penance. Holy Scripture for this very reason tells us not only of their failings, but of their repentance as well, so that, if we have followed them in sin, we may follow them also in penance. "For," as St. Paul says, "what things soever were written were written for our learning: that through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures, we might have hope" (Rom. xv. 4). Thomas, Peter, David, Mary Magdalen and others who had grievously sinned, all these found mercy and forgiveness when they turned to Our Lord with a penitent heart, and so shall we find forgiveness if we approach the throne of mercy with an humble and contrite heart. But above all let us remember that we are miserable and

weak creatures, and let us avoid all dangers and occasions of sin. After Thomas, Peter, David, and Mary Magdalen had risen from their fall they were more cautious and persevered till the end. Follow their example! Keep the firm purpose of amendment which you are making at the paschal Confession. Watch and pray that you enter not into temptation. He who perseveres till the end, shall be saved. Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Vigilance over Children.

"I am the good shepherd."—John x. 11.

SYNOPSIS.—The Gospel should remind parents that they are the properly appointed shepherds over the souls of their children. The necessity of vigilance over children, and how to exercise it. The children the seed of the Church; they must be protected against the cockle of the enemy. Many parents neglectful. Even grown persons need supervision: The prodigal son, the Israelites. How much more children. The Lord will demand their souls from parents. Keep in mind your responsibilities.

In to-day's gospel our Saviour is represented to us as a good shepherd. What does a good shepherd do for his flock? He is ever watchful for the welfare of his sheep; he seeks for them the best pasture grounds, he defends them against the attack of wild beasts, being prepared to sacrifice even his life for his flock. Jesus has done this for us, His sheep. He is indeed a good shepherd, and we can never thank Him sufficiently for all the blessings He has showered upon us. In imitation of Christ parents should be the good shepherds of their children. Children, my dear Christian parents, are sheep, requiring most careful guidance, so that they may not err and become a prey to the eternal enemy. You must constantly watch over them, trying to keep away from them anything detrimental to their innocence and virtue. How this vigilance should be exercised I will explain to you to-day and will point out (1) the necessity of the vigilance; and (2) how it should be exercised. May the Lord bless my words.

1. The necessity of close vigilance over children is indicated in the parable of the seed and the cockle. When the sower fell asleep, "his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat and went his way" (Matt. xiii. 25). Children may be considered the seed sown by the Church in holy Baptism, that they may grow up in the field of the faith and yield fruit, and the parents are appointed guardians over the seed to keep the enemy from sowing cockle. Unfortunately, however, we often see children that are bold and wicked, and hear them carry on conversations of which even adults would have to be ashamed. What is the reason of this deplorable state of affairs? "An enemy hath done this." While the

parents, so to speak, were asleep and neglected to watch over their children, the devil by means of other wicked children came and sowed the cockle of sin in the young hearts, and only too quickly has it borne fruit. "The heart of man," says Holy Scripture, "is disposed to evil from childhood," and if it is not watched and guarded, wickedness easily takes the upper hand and the good seed is choked. When the prodigal son had left the watchful eyes of his father he began to live a vicious life. When Moses delayed his return from the mount, the Israelites being left without his supervision, revolted against Aaron and said: "Arise, make us gods, that may go before us." "And the people sat down to eat, and drink, and they rose up to play" (Exod. xxxii. 6).

If the want of supervision has such fatal consequences even for grown people, what then will become of children, if parents neglect to watch over them? Take for example a class at school. As long as the teacher is present to control the children and to punish wrong doing, they will behave themselves; but no sooner has he turned his back when they begin to be boisterous and to do all kinds of mischief, little caring for resulting punishment if caught at it. Thus it is with your children. If you do not look after them, if you neglect to hinder them from wrong doing, and if you fail to encourage them to do good they will go from bad to worse. Your vigilance therefore must extend to all their doings, both in and out of the house.

2. Parents have many cares and worries; but their greatest care must be the good education of their children. It is praiseworthy to be properly concerned for the temporal welfare, but no riches should be so dear to parents as their children, over whose doings they must watch with greatest diligence, to see whether they pray and go to church, whether they receive the Sacraments, whether they come home at the proper time, whether the servants of the house teach them to sin, and if they associate only with good children. When Sarah feared that her son Isaac was in danger of sin by associating with Ismael she asked Abraham to dismiss Ismael from the house. Parents should take this to heart and should dismiss servants if it is to be feared that they will lead their children into sin. We read in Bible history that the Patriarch Jacob became worried when his sons unduly remained away from the house and he sent Joseph after them. May parents show a similar solicitude for their children and refuse to let them evade supervision. Unfortunately

there are parents so careless and indifferent as not to care what their children do, or where they spend their time. They not only allow them all liberties in the house, but actually are glad when the children go out, so as not to be bothered with them. Some, indeed, seem more concerned for the welfare of cat and dog, than for son or daughter. If the dog is not home at the proper time they rush out looking for him, but if a son or daughter has remained out late at night they do not think it worth while to even ask where he or she has been. Sometimes the neighbors know more about the evil ways of the children than their own parents, who are the last to hear of it because they do not take the trouble to ask. Examples of the negligence of parents towards their children are met with almost every day. And what is the consequence of this neglect? Children are corrupted, do all kinds of improprieties, are led into sin and so become the disgrace and worry of their parents. How will parents fare when Our Lord asks them for the souls of their children? They will find the responsibility an awful one, and may possibly be eternally lost because they neglected the education of their children.

My dear Christian parents, keep in mind your responsibility and fulfil your duty towards your children. Watch over them, be their good shepherd. Remember that the Lord will demand from you the souls of your children, and take care lest they be lost. Whether they are in or out of doors, whether they are alone or in company, ever keep your eyes open, keep strict watch, try and turn away from them everything detrimental to virtue, and lead them on to the right path. The more careful your vigilance, the more confident you may be that they will not fall into sin, and you may meet without fear the final account for the souls of your children which the Lord will demand from you. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Our Sojourn on Earth.

"Your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you."—John xvi. 22.

SYNOPSIS.—Christ's words of parting, addressed to His apostles, also addressed to us. He foretold the sufferings and persecutions to which His followers would be subjected. He knows we are but weak creatures, and does not expect that we are indifferent to adversities; it is natural that we may be sad in trials, since He Himself was sad in the Garden of Olives. But He wants us to put our confidence in Him, and to take up any cross without murmuring and complaint.

In to-day's gospel our Saviour speaks of the short time that will elapse between His Resurrection and Ascension, and, again, between His Ascension and the death of the apostles. "A little while and now you shall not see me," i. e., I shall be on earth but a short time and then ascend to heaven, "and again a little while and you shall see me; because I go to the Father," i. e., after the few years that you will still spend on earth you will again see me in heaven. During your time on earth you will suffer much and your hearts will often be sad; but have courage and confidence, the time of sorrow will be short and eternal joy is to follow. "Then your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man shall take from you." Our Saviour exhorts His apostles to put their trust in God, and I will likewise exhort you to-day to trust in the Lord.

No father ever loved his children more tenderly than Christ loved His apostles. "Having loved his own who were in the world," writes St. John, "he loved them unto the end." Knowing that His hour had come, that He was to pass out of this world to the Father, He bade farewell, at the last supper, to His apostles, and on this occasion gave them most wholesome teachings and exhortations. He told them, among other things, that death would soon separate Him from them, but that He would rise again on the third day, and that, after His Resurrection, He would remain a little while with them and then return to the Father. He bade them not to let their hearts be troubled, for he would prepare a place for them in the Father's house, and He would send to them the Spirit of truth to abide with them until the end of time. He foretold that after

His Resurrection they would be persecuted for His sake, that even the hour would come when to kill them would be considered a service to God. "Amen, amen, I say to you, that you shall lament and weep." He warned them not to weaken when these things would come to pass, not to become impatient or discouraged, because the time of suffering would be but short and eternal joy would follow. "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many mansions. If not, I would have told you: because I go to prepare a place for you. And if I shall go, and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and will take you to myself; that where I am, you also may be" (John xiv. 1-3). "Then your heart shall rejoice; and your joy no man shall take from you."

You see that Our Saviour does not require of the apostles indifference to sufferings, trials, tribulations and disappointments, He only forbids them to murmur against God as if an injustice had been done them; He expects them to resign themselves in confidence to the will of God, no matter what will happen. We see Christ Himself sad and sorrowful when, in the Garden of Olives, He beheld the bitter chalice that He was to drain; but because the will of God, His heavenly Father, was that He should drink the bitter chalice to the very dregs, He willingly accepted it. "My Father," He said, "if it be possible let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matt. xxvi. 39).

With this example of the Lord before them the apostles of Christ did not lose courage nor patience in suffering. It was fulfilled as Christ had foretold: they were persecuted, tormented, martyred, imprisoned and led to death; but they murmured not, nor did they complain; they suffered disgrace and pain, even the most cruel death, with patience and steadfastness in the Lord, and were happy to bear it all for the love of Jesus. And what gave them this sublime courage and patience? The teachings, the example of their Master; their trust in the word of the Lord that there was prepared for them a place in heaven, where they would receive their eternal reward.

The apostles considered themselves strangers in this world. A man traveling in a strange country where he is made to bear many hardships, comforts himself with the thought: all will be well when I return home: and so, too, the apostles, sent into the sinful world, comforted themselves. He had said to them: "Go

ye into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mark xvi. 15). In all their sufferings they were strengthened by the thought that their Lord and Master had also suffered and that the time would surely come when their sorrow would be turned to joy.

Although we are not persecuted because of our faith, nor martyred and put to death like the apostles, we are, nevertheless, not exempt from sufferings and hardships. Sickness and pain may be meted out to us, failure of success in business may trouble us, family affairs may worry us, enemies may slander and injure us, poverty and need or other troubles may harass us, and there is no man entirely free from care. What are we to do in our troubles? Shall we lose confidence in God and murmur and complain? No, my dear brethren, let us follow in the footsteps of the apostles, and accept with resignation the suffering as from the hand of God; it comes from God, our loving Father, who alone knows what is best for us, and who has sent this trial to test our love and to strengthen our faith. He has prepared a place in heaven also for us and will not withhold it, if we prove to be faithful disciples and followers of His divine Son. Bear in mind the warning of Christ: "If any man will follow me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. And he that taketh not up his cross, and followeth me, is not worthy of me." Christ Himself, the spotless lamb of sacrifice, was glorified through suffering and how may we, His sinful disciples, expect a better fate?

Therefore, dear Christians, do not murmur and complain if sufferings come your way, bear them patiently and put your trust in God. Living in this strange land you cannot expect anything else; it is not the home of the Christian, and if we persevere in patience until the end there will be fulfilled also in us the promise of the Lord that our hearts shall rejoice and that our joy no man shall take from us. Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

How to Reach Our Destination.

"Whither goest thou?"—John xvi. 5.

SYNOPSIS.—We are on our journey to eternity, and it behooves us to ask ourselves, "Whither goest thou?" When on a journey to a strange land we must acquaint ourselves with the language spoken there and must supply ourselves with the means in currency there. So, if we desire our journey to heaven to be successful, we must know the language used there—the praise of God; and acquire the means of value there—good works.

Although our Saviour had plainly told His disciples that He would soon return to His heavenly Father, yet none of them asked any questions; their hearts were filled with sorrow. Our Saviour reproached them, saying: "None of you asketh me whither goest thou?"

We, my dear Christians, are on our journey to eternity and every day brings us nearer the goal, yet how many are there who ever think of this and earnestly ask themselves: Whither goest thou? Too many men love only the world and its honors, riches and pleasures; they have no longing for heaven; if they should suddenly die there would be grave doubt as to whether they would enter heaven. When one wishes to travel to a strange land, he must make himself acquainted with the language of that land; he must provide himself with the coin that is current there. If he fails to do these things he cannot expect to find welcome there. It is the same with us who are journeying to heaven. In order to reach heaven we must (1) be acquainted with the language used there and (2) have the means necessary to reach our destination.

(1) If you wish your journey to heaven to end successfully you must, first of all, know the language of the heavenly hosts. And this is no other than the praise of God. The prophet Isaias (vi. 31) heard how the heavenly spirits cried one to another: "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts." King David resolved not to use any other language but the praise of God and said: "I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall be always in my mouth" (Ps. xxxiii. 2). Let me ask you, my brethren, have you made yourselves acquainted with this language of heaven?

Blessed Cardinal Hugo was accustomed to say: "The tongue was given us to praise God, to edify our neighbor, and to accuse ourselves." Do you praise God? Do you thank Him when He raises His hand in blessing? Do you praise Him, even in sufferings and tribulations? If you were mindful of the power of the Lord, His praise would never depart out of your mouths (Judith xiii. 25); but, alas, you often forget Him even when He bestows happiness and blessing, peace and joy; and if He sends adversities and sickness you are likely to murmur and complain. In praying the Lord's prayer you say: "Hallowed be thy name;" but you often think little of what you say there, especially if He does not grant you what you desire.

Is your neighbor perhaps exempt from trouble? And if he is not, and talks to you about his cares, do you strengthen his faith, confirm his virtue, advise him in doubt, console him in sorrow? Do you, perhaps, give scandal by speaking scornfully about placing confidence in God? Instead of using the language of heaven you too often scandalize your neighbor by impure conversations and songs, perhaps you injure him by slander, by fraud, you may even destroy his steadfastness in faith by ridiculing the holy truths of religion and the holy practices of the Church; thus, your neighbor is not edified, and God is not honored.

There are, also, many who misuse the gift of speech by sin and do not use it to accuse themselves before God. They do not follow the words of David: "I will declare my iniquity; and I will think for my sin" (Ps. xxxvii. 19). And many of those who do go to Confession have not a very sincere sorrow for their sins, their pride will not allow them to admit that they have committed grievous offenses. They have all kinds of excuses and arguments.

Is this the language of heaven? Is this giving praise to God? A sinner's praise without true repentance is not pleasing to the Lord. "Praise is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner" says the wise Sirach (Eccl. xv. 9).

If you do not practise the language of heaven you will not enter there. Neither will you enter if you do not possess the means to take you there.

2. The only currency which is of value for heaven is good works. Therefore our Saviour says: "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my heavenly Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the

kingdom of heaven." And at another time: "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire" (Matt. vii. 19, 21). God does not care whether you are rich or poor, young or old, handsome or plain, master or servant, exalted or humble; He requires of you good works, and if He does not find them in you, there is nothing to save you from the fate of the barren tree. God does not look at the person, says the apostle, He regards each one according to his merit. "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire."

What fate would be yours if suddenly, this moment, called before the judgment seat of God? Would you appear before Him with merits and good works in your favor? In place of merits would it not be perhaps pride, avarice, unkindness, impurity, intemperance, lies and slanders, and other sins and vices that would load down your soul? Remember the fate of the barren tree, and ask yourselves what have they to expect, who bring forth evil fruits, i. e., sin and vice? Will such enter heaven? No, indeed, heaven is a reward only for those who perform good works and thereby make use of the means to reach heaven.

There is, I am sure, no one among us who does not desire to enter heaven. Therefore, my brethren, do not forget that good works alone are the means which will gain admittance to heaven for you. Begin at once to lay by these means and do not postpone this from day to day. You do not know when the Lord will come to demand an account from you. Ask yourselves what in the hour of death you will wish you had done, and do it while you are yet able to do it; for you know not how soon death will overtake you.

Take these words to heart, my dear Christians. Give praise to God every day of your life, for the praise of God is the language of heaven. Perform good works, for they are the coins which purchase heaven. May God grant us all the grace of a good and fruitful life. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

Common Prayer.

"Amen, amen I say to you; if you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it you."—John xvi. 23.

SYNOPSIS.—The advantages of common prayer over individual prayer. Common prayer recommended by the Lord; its efficacy attested by examples from Holy Scripture, therefore prescribed and urged by the Church.

Tomorrow, and on Tuesday and Wednesday the usual procession will take place through the fields, to ask God's blessing for the harvest. The origin of these processions can be traced to St. Mamertus, a bishop of a city called Vienne, in France. When in the year 470, Vienne and the neighboring provinces were visited by earthquakes, and the crops devastated by wild animals and fires, the bishop in order to appease the anger of a just God, vowed to proclaim public prayers and processions in his diocese, and God, in answer to the prayer of the pious bishop, turned away His wrath. Afterwards the processions were held yearly, on the three days before the feast of the Ascension, and they spread gradually all through France, and, finally, were introduced into other countries, and in the course of time the three days were appointed rogation days, or days for public prayer, by Pope Leo III. As these are days of public and common prayer, let me point out to you to-day the advantages of common prayer.

Common prayer has at all times been given the preference over individual prayer. Christ exhorted His disciples to common prayer, in the following words: "If two of you shall consent upon earth, concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in heaven. For where there are two or three gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. xviii. 19, 20). "If according to this," says St. Cyprian, "the common prayer of two or three is so efficacious, how much more powerful will be the prayer of a congregation who consent concerning whatsoever they will ask?" And St. Ambrose believes that: "If many gather unanimously in prayer, they make a formidable body, and it is impossible that the urgent prayer of such a vast and earnest-

minded body will be unheard." In the Old Testament we find the prophet Joel exhorting the Jews: "Gather together the people, sanctify the church, assemble the ancients, gather together the little ones, and them that suck at the breasts" (Joel ii. 16). The prophet commanded big and little, young and old, to come together in order to appease God by public prayer and penance, to turn away His wrath, and to plead for mercy and forgiveness, hoping that if the Lord inclined not to show mercy to the adults because of their sins, He might be moved to mercy by the prayer of innocent children.

The power of common prayer was known, furthermore, to Queen Esther; when informed that on a certain day all the Jews in the land were to be killed, she sent for Mardochai and bade him: "Go, and gather together all the Jews whom thou shalt find in Susan, and pray ye for me" (Esther iv. 16), and the petitions and pleading of so many, moved the Lord to show mercy to the Jews. At another time, to give a further example from Holy Scripture, when Heliodorus was sent to Jerusalem to take away the treasures of the temple, the high priest Onias urged him earnestly to desist from his purpose. Heliodorus, however, would not yield. Then we read, that "others also came flocking together out of their houses, praying and making public supplication, because the place was like to come into contempt. And all holding up their hands towards heaven, made supplication. For the expectation of the mixed multitude, and of the high priest who was in an agony, would have moved any one to pity. And these indeed called upon Almighty God to preserve the things that had been committed to them, safe and sure for those that had committed them. But Heliodorus executed that which he had resolved on, himself being present in the same place with his guard about the treasury. But the spirit of the Almighty God gave a great evidence of his presence, so that all that had presumed to obey him, falling down by the power of God, were struck with fainting and dread. For there appeared to them a horse with a terrible rider upon him, adorned with a very rich covering; and he ran fiercely and struck Heliodorus with his fore feet, and he that sat upon him seemed to have armour of gold. Moreover there appeared two other young men beautiful and strong, bright and glorious, and in comely apparel; who stood by him on either side, and scourged him without ceasing with many stripes. And Heliodorus suddenly fell to the ground, and they took him up covered with great darkness, and having put him into a

litter they carried him out. So he that came with many servants and all his guard into the aforesaid treasury was carried out, no one being able to help him, the manifest power of God being known" (II. Mach. 3). Truly, great proofs of the power of public and common prayer.

And how can it be otherwise? Those who pray together with the same purpose, are united in love; they are one heart and one soul and all lay the same prayer and request at the feet of the Almighty. How could the God of love and mercy resist the unanimous prayer of so many? Common prayer is a united supplication, by which God is not only publicly honored and praised, but by which the indifferent become zealous, and by which His enemies are confounded. Therefore our Saviour commanded: "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

We all, my dear Christians, are in need of the grace and mercy of God, because we all are sinners and deserve to be chastised. Even for our bodily welfare we need His assistance, for without it the grain in the field can not grow and bear fruit; He must give sunshine and rain at the proper time that the crop may not perish. He must bless our worldly affairs, if they are to succeed. Therefore let us pray, especially in these days, that the Lord may shelter and protect our holy Church and its head, that He may preserve us from calamity and sickness, that He may forgive our sins and give us the spirit of penance, that He may strengthen our virtue and lead us to eternal life. Amen.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION.

The Holy Ghost Our Comforter.

"When the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me."—John xv. 26.

SYNOPSIS.—The world likened to a large infirmary, the inhabitants of which are all ailing. This suffering foretold by the Lord—but also a Comforter. Comfort a thing not common among men. It must come from God. Call, therefore, upon the Holy Ghost, that He may be your Comforter in all your affairs, and that He may fill your heart with the holy love of God.

Not without reason may this world be compared to a large hospital, harboring people afflicted with all kinds of ailments; for it is a fact that there is hardly anybody who is free from care and trouble. Suffering and tribulation was foretold to the apostles in the gospel read to-day. "They will put you out of the synagogues: yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth a service to God." But He promised them a Comforter, the Holy Ghost. Now, although we may not be persecuted like the apostles because of our faith, nevertheless we also have to bear all kinds of suffering and tribulation and are in need of a comforter. The same Comforter that Our Lord promised to His apostles, and whom He sent to them on the feast of Pentecost, He has also promised and sent to us. Let me then to-day speak to you of this Holy Comforter.

David was a mighty king, possessor of great treasures and master of many servants, and yet he had no one to comfort him in the time of persecution and misery. "I looked for one that would grieve together with me, but there was none; and for one that would comfort me, and I found none" (Ps. lxviii. 21). Solomon, the son of David and successor to the throne, surpassed all his contemporaries not only in riches but in wisdom, but he also confessed that at no time did he meet one who endeavored to comfort those oppressed by their fellowmen or afflicted in any other way. "I turned myself to other things," he said, "and I saw the oppressions that are done under the sun, and the tears of the innocent, and they had no comforter; and they were not able to resist their violence, being destitute of help from any" (Ecclesiastes iv. 1). And must we join with

Solomon in his complaint? No, my dear brethren, take courage, for we are far happier even though we have not his riches, for what David lacked in trouble and persecution, what Solomon did not experience in all his wisdom, we possess and enjoy, for the Holy Ghost, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, is the Comforter in all our sufferings and tribulations. He is the Father of the poor, the dispenser of divine gifts and graces, the light of our hearts and guest of our souls. He is the same Comforter by whom the prophets were enlightened, the fathers of the Church instructed, the martyrs strengthened, the sick healed, the apostles encouraged, the just kept on the path of virtue, the sinners converted. In His name and power miracles are wrought, the youth preserved in purity, and the Church protected against error and schism. When to Lamech a son was born whom he named Noe, he called together all his relations and neighbors, and, showing them the child, said: "This same shall comfort us from the works and labors of our hands on the earth, which the Lord hath cursed" (Gen. v. 29). With far greater truth we may apply these words to the Holy Spirit and say: If hell itself should wage war against us we need not despair, but have only to call upon the Holy Ghost for strength and assistance, and He will comfort us in all our adversities. If the whole world should forsake us, the Holy Ghost will comfort us. It we are in doubt, the Holy Ghost will enlighten us, and He will teach us to find the right path. If we dare not raise our eyes to our heavenly Father, on account of the number of our sins; if we are afraid to have recourse to our Saviour, because of our ingratitude and treason, let us not despair; for we have another divine intercessor, the Holy Ghost, who is willing to comfort us and help us to obtain forgiveness for our sins. If the soul is sick with sin and longs for rescue and comfort, the Holy Ghost will heal it, if we in true repentance implore His aid. If our intellect be darkened, the ray of divine light, poured out by the Holy Ghost, will drive away all darkness. If our adversities be so great as to seem unbearable, the Holy Ghost will comfort and strengthen us so that we may persevere in patience. If our love for God has grown cold, the Holy Ghost will again enkindle and nourish it. If our soul is poor in virtue, the Holy Ghost as a dispenser of spiritual treasures will make it rich in grace. The Holy Ghost is the origin and source of all comfort. He is the Comforter of the penitent, the Comforter of the just, the Comforter of the ignorant, the Comforter of the

timid, the Comforter of the persecuted, the Comforter of the dying, the Comforter of the poor souls in purgatory. With this mighty Comforter at our side, what need we fear?

St. Paul tells us of his sufferings: "In many more labors, in prisons most frequently, in stripes above measure, in deaths often. Of the Jews five times did I receive forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once I was stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I was in the depth of the sea. In journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils from my own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethren. In labors and painfulness, in much watchings, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness" (II. Cor. 11). It would really seem that the apostle after all such misery might have lost courage. Far from that he says: "I am filled with comfort: I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation" (II. Cor. vii. 4).

There you see, my Christians, how the Holy Ghost comforts the one who calls upon Him for aid. If we also wish to partake of this comfort in the many troubles and afflictions of this life; if we also wish to be strengthened in dangers and temptations; if we also wish to be enlightened by Him to know the truth and follow it: we must, first of all, prepare our hearts to worthily receive Him; we must cleanse them from the filth of sin; the Holy Ghost will not enter an impure heart to bring it comfort. We must pray to Him, with all confidence, for comfort, grace and aid. Let us do this especially in these days, which are devoted to the preparation for the holy feast of Pentecost. Let us purify our hearts from sin, and pray that God may send to us the Holy Ghost, to enlighten, teach, refresh, strengthen and comfort us. Let us pray with the Church: Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of the faithful and kindle in them the fire of holy love! Amen.

PENTECOST.

Fruits of the Holy Spirit.

"But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things."—John xiv. 26.

SYNOPSIS.—Two of the principal fruits of the Holy Spirit are: 1. Patience. 2. Meekness. The opposite qualities signs of the evil spirit. Acquire these two virtues and the spirit of God will dwell in your hearts.

To-day we celebrate the remembrance of the descent of the Holy Ghost, whom our Saviour had repeatedly promised to send to the apostles. "And when the days of Pentecost were accomplished, they were all assembled in one place: And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues as it were of fire, and it sat upon everyone of them: And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost." The Holy Ghost was not only promised and sent to the apostles, He was also sent to us, but there is doubt if we are all filled with the Holy Ghost. When St. Paul came to Ephesus he found certain disciples and said to them: "Have you received the Holy Ghost since you believed? But they said to him: We have not so much as heard whether there be a Holy Ghost" (Acts xix. 2).

Although we are not as ignorant as these disciples were, still all of us may not know the signs which show that the Holy Ghost is within us. Therefore I wish to point out to you to-day these signs, hoping many of you may be able to say: The Holy Ghost is in us.

1. The first of the signs by which we may surely know that we possess the Holy Ghost, is patience in suffering and adversity. If God sends us a cross and we resign ourselves to His holy will and bear it patiently, it is proof that we have the Spirit of God in us. We behold this in the apostles. Before they had received the Holy Ghost, they were annoyed at disgrace and injury and became impatient in disappointment. When, for instance, James and John came to a city of the Samaritans and were refused admittance they became angry and said, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" Our Lord rebuking them

said: "You know not of what spirit you are"; i. e., you know not what spirit urges you on, you believe that you are urged by the spirit of God, whereas it is the evil spirit. "The son of man came not to destroy souls, but to save" (Luke ix. 55-56). After the apostles had received the Holy Ghost they became forbearing and patient; "they indeed went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus" (Acts v. 41). Just as a bird may be recognized by its song, so the one possessing the Holy Ghost is recognized by his utterances. St. Paul in his letter to the Galatians mentions twelve fruits of the Spirit and among them is patience. The rare virtue of patience is found in those who possess the Holy Ghost. The more a soul possessed of the Holy Ghost is humbled, persecuted and oppressed, the greater its opportunity to grow in virtue and grace. In the spring time flowers spring up in the fields and grow there in all their beauty. How would these flowers come forth, had they not patiently endured the hardships of the winter? Thus it is with man. We can not always enjoy spring and summer; we cannot have everything we desire in this world; we must sometimes meet with disappointments and trials; but patience will overcome all hardships and time will bring roses.

At one time there lived two hermits who served God to the best of their knowledge and power. Close by their humble abode they had a garden, in which they raised vegetables for their support. The fame of their humility, patience and edifying life became widespread in the land. A certain old and pious man heard of them and said: I will go and convince myself of the truth of what is said of them; I will test their virtue. He accordingly set out to visit these hermits. They received him most kindly and after having prayed with him invited him to join them in a meal. After that they took him to their garden and showed him around. The visitor deliberately walked over the planted beds, thereby destroying and ruining the vegetables upon which the hermits had spent so much labor and which they badly needed for their sustenance. Nevertheless the hermits never said a word nor did they in any other way manifest any displeasure or impatience. Then the visitor exclaimed: "Thanks be to the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I see that the Holy Ghost truly lives in you. The injury which I caused was intended to test your patience, by which I would be sure to discover whether you are truly pious."

Let this be an example for you, my Christian people. If misfortunes, sufferings and adversities come unawares, do not murmur and complain, but resign yourself to the will of God and bear them patiently. Patience is becoming to the Christian who wishes to be a disciple of the Saviour who said: "If any man will follow me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Through trials and sufferings God wishes to purify us and give us an opportunity to merit heaven. "Tribulation worketh patience," says the apostle; "and patience trial; and trial hope; and hope confoundeth not" (Romans v. 3).

2. Another sign by which we may know that the Spirit of God is in us, is meekness. Just as the evil spirit arouses anger and vengeance, the Spirit of God produces meekness. Holy Scripture says of King Saul: "The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him"; of David, however, Holy Scripture says: "The Spirit of the Lord came upon David" (I Kings xvi. 13-14). How did the evil spirit and the Spirit of God manifest themselves? Saul raved and stormed, but when David played the harp, Saul was refreshed and rested, for then the evil spirit departed from him. You see that the Spirit of God, which was in David, conquered the anger and raving which the evil spirit excited in Saul. If sometimes Christians, even sisters and brothers, or husband and wife, quarrel with each other, or even seek to harm each other; if they curse and become angry at trifling offenses it is a sign that the evil spirit and not the Spirit of God is in them; for the Spirit of God is the spirit of meekness.

What answer can you, my brethren, give to the question: Is the Spirit of God in you? Do you murmur and complain at tribulations, do you become angry, do you curse and swear and seek vengeance? Then the evil spirit is in you. The apostle says: "Whoever does not possess the spirit of Christ does not belong to Him," i. e., he is not His disciple, nor servant, and has no right to the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, my Christian people, if we truly wish to be children of God, loyal followers of Christ, heirs to the kingdom of heaven, let us banish the evil spirit from our hearts, so that the Spirit of God may enter and dwell therein. I will conclude with the words of the Psalmist: "Be subject to the Lord and pray to Him. Cease from anger and leave rage. The meek shall inherit the land, and shall delight in abundance of peace" (Ps. xxxvi.) Amen.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

Loyalty to Christ.

"Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."—Matt. xxviii. 20.

SYNOPSIS.—The feast of the Holy Trinity should remind us of our admission into the Church by holy Baptism, and of the loyalty we promised then, and since then, to God. Loyalty a great virtue. How loyalty to God is often sinned against. Henceforth keep your faith with your God and with your neighbor.

To-day we celebrate the feast of the Holy Trinity. On this day we are reminded of the Sacrament of Baptism which we received in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, and by which our hearts were cleansed from original sin and we became children of God and heirs of heaven. We are furthermore reminded of the promise which our sponsors made for us at the baptismal font and which we renewed at First Holy Communion, of the promise to believe all the Holy Catholic Church believes and teaches and to live according to the precepts of the Church. In recalling this promise to-day, will we be able to testify that we have kept this promise? Our Saviour said to His apostles: "Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," and in consequence of this command the Church year in and year out keeps before us what our Saviour has commanded and exhorts us to keep these commandments. If we look, however, at our life and examine our conscience, we must admit that we have not observed all things which the Lord commanded; on the contrary, some of us must admit that they have been disloyal to Him and broken His commandments. Loyalty to a duty, to a trust, to a master is a most praiseworthy virtue, and I wish to talk to you to-day on loyalty to Christ.

Nothing is more becoming to a man than being faithful to his word. In ancient times a verbal promise was considered as sacred as an oath and was kept as faithfully. But where is this loyalty to one's word in our days? In every walk of life, in social and business circles you hear nowadays of instances of unfaithful-

ness and deceit; as a result one mistrusts the other. And what can even be said of our faithfulness to God? This moment we promise that we will be loyal and keep His commandments and the next this promise is too often forgotten; He is offended anew and the repeated offense is often worse than the first. Examine your conscience and you must admit that you have often been guilty of disloyalty to God. How often, for instance, has one promised to overcome his inordinate desires, to avoid the occasion of sin; but only a few hours later perhaps he has fallen into the same sin. How many a drunkard has made the firm purpose not to drink to excess and to avoid bad company, but how many have been faithful to their word? Married people who lived in discord have promised to be patient and peaceable; but at the very first opportunity they again give way to wrath and anger. Do not these unfaithful people deserve the punishment which our Lord threatened to the Israelites? "I will hide my face from them and will consider what their last end shall be: (i. e., I will withdraw my grace and will consider what their end shall be) for it is a perverse generation, and unfaithful children" (Deut. xxxii. 20). Whoever makes a promise to God and fails to keep it, is unfaithful to God and deserving of His punishment. "An unfaithful and foolish promise," says Holy Scripture, "displeaseth God; but whatsoever thou hast vowed, pay it" (Ecclesiastes v. 3).

You have vowed to believe all the Catholic Church believes and teaches; you have vowed not to lose confidence in God; you have vowed to renounce the devil, all his works and his pomps; you have vowed to keep your heart pure from sin, to keep the commandments of God and to strive to lead a virtuous life; you have perhaps vowed to make restitution of ill gotten gain. "Whatever thou hast vowed, pay it; for an unfaithful and foolish promise displeaseth the Lord."

In the army of King Alexander of Macedonia, there was once a disloyal soldier. When the king heard of his acts of unfaithfulness he sent for him and said to him: "Either lay aside my name, or no longer disgrace it by your unfaithfulness." Christ, a greater and mighter King, calls to Christians who have promised to be faithful and failed to keep their promise: Unfaithful servants, you bear my name and promised to obey me and to follow in my footsteps; why are you unfaithful? Either lay aside the name of Christ, or disgrace it no longer in your unfaithfulness.

Let us henceforth keep the promises we make to God and to our neighbor. Let us especially beware of a relapse into sin; let us, as true followers of Christ, walk in the path of virtue and observe His commandments every day of our life, so that when we finally stand before the judgment seat of God we may hear the comforting words: "Well done, good and faithful servant, because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. xv. 21). Amen.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

The Sacrament of Love.

"A certain man made a great supper, and invited many."—Luke xiv. 16.

SYNOPSIS.—The great supper of which the Gospel speaks is the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. The paschal lamb of the Old Law was partaken of amidst great solemnities; the paschal lamb of the New Law an infinitely greater solemnity. A proof of the great love of God and a pledge to us of eternal life.

The certain man who made a great supper referred to in the gospel means Jesus Christ, and the great supper is the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist; the servant represents the minister of God, the priest, who calls and invites the faithful to the holy table; the invited guests are the Christians; the various excuses which those invited had for not appearing, represent the various attachments to the pleasures and things in this world; the poor, the feeble, the blind, and the lame in the gospel are the true Christians, who having humbly realized their weakness and needs, approach the table of the Lord and refresh themselves with light and strength, that they may be able to resist temptation and continue in the path of virtue. How truly wise is the love of our Lord and Saviour for us. Let us to-day contemplate this great love manifested in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, and let us consider how we should thank Him for His love.

The eating of the paschal lamb was celebrated by the Jews in a most festal manner and the kings appeared at the feast in all their glory. We read in Holy Scripture the praise of King Josias in the words: "Josias gave all the people that were found there in the solemnity of the phase, of lambs and kids of the flocks, and of other small cattle thirty thousand, and of oxen three thousand, all these were of the king's substance" (II Paral. xxxv. 7). But the eating of the Lamb of the New Law is greater and more wonderful. At this feast only one lamb is offered, the Lamb which was sacrificed at Calvary for the sins of the world. And this great feast of love lasts not only through paschal time but is continued every day until the end of the world. Not only princes and nobles are invited, but all the faithful, great and

small, young and old, poor and rich, master and servant, happy and needful, healthy and sick. "O wonderful feast," says St. Thomas, "where the servant and the humble receive the Master!" Man is but dust and ashes, still he not only approaches the table of the Lord, but the lowliest servant may there receive the flesh and blood of Christ. Who can fathom this love of Christ? "Having loved his own," says St. John (xiii. 1), "who were in the world, he loved them unto the end", and gave them the greatest proof of His love by instituting the Sacrament of the Altar.

After the angel Raphael had delivered the younger Tobias from many dangers, and had restored the sight of the older Tobias, the younger Tobias asked: "What can we give him sufficient for these things?" (Tobias xii. 3). Likewise we should ask: What can we give our loving Saviour sufficient for these things, namely, that He in His eternal love gives Himself as food in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist and unites Himself most intimately with us? And then we learn that He asks nothing more than that we love Him in return and that we often approach His Holy Table with devotion and humility. Have you hitherto thanked your Saviour for this love and have you loved Him by observing His commandments? "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them," the Lord says, "he it is that loveth me." If Jesus should ask you as He once asked Peter: "Lovest thou me?" would you be able to answer with Peter: "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love Thee"? I doubt it. You may often say: I love Thee, O God; but the all-wise God and Saviour sees that your heart is attached to this earth, and that you love riches, pleasures, honor, esteem, relations and friends, more than you love Him. Think of the insult you do to your loving Saviour by preferring the vain things of this world to Him and refusing Him your heart. Mend your ways, my brethren, and henceforth give Him your love. Approach the Sacraments frequently with love and devotion. He lovingly invites you; how dare you say: I can not come? I am afraid that if a sum of money were offered every time the Sacraments were approached some of you would approach them oftener; not a sum of money, but behold your Lord and Saviour Himself, the almighty King of heaven and earth, is here offered to you: how dare you say: I cannot come? If your heart is filled with love for Him, you will always find time to visit Him in the Church, and to adore Him in the Sacrament of love. The Church celebrates the feast of Corpus Christi with great

solemnity and invites the faithful during the octave to visit Jesus and adore Him in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. What a disgrace for us if at this time our Saviour should have to say as He did to His disciples: "Could you not watch one hour with me?"

St. Paul says: "Know you not, that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (I Cor. iii. 16). Let us preserve our hearts pure from sin, that Jesus may ever live in us as in a living temple. Let us give due honor and praise to our Saviour and often receive Him worthily in the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, that this Sacrament may be for us a pledge of eternal life. **Amen.**

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Murmuring Against God.

"And the Pharisees and the scribes murmured."—Luke xv. 2.

SYNOPSIS.—Murmuring against God a great sin. Caused by pride, avarice, envy and impatience. The Lord severely punishes murmuring. Example: The Israelites in the desert. No cause for murmuring if we have the right faith and confidence in God.

The scribes and the Pharisees were angry at the loving concern manifested by our Saviour towards sinners and murmured because He sat at table with them. In answer to their murmurings Jesus related the parable of the shepherd who went after his lost sheep, and that of the woman who had lost her groat and diligently sought until she had found it. "I say to you, there shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance." There are also in our days some people who murmur against God, and I wish to point out to you to-day the gravity of this sin.

Murmuring against God is caused either by pride, avarice, envy, or impatience. Pride caused the murmur of the Pharisee whose house Mary Magdalen entered to anoint the feet of Jesus. "If this man were a prophet, he would know surely who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, that she is a sinner" (Luke vii. 39). It was avarice that caused Judas to murmur, when he saw the costly ointment used by Mary. "Why," he said, "was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? Now he said this, not because he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and having the purse, carried the things that were put therein" (John xii. 5-6). Envy, again, caused the laborers to murmur when the master of the house paid to those last called into the vineyard as much as to them. "And receiving it they murmured against the master of the house" (Matt. xx. 11). And impatience caused the Israelites to murmur in the wilderness, for they were not satisfied with what God had done for them. He rained manna from heaven and gave them quails for food, but still they murmured. They offended God by constant murmuring, says St. Augustine, and were therefore severely punished. Some were killed by fiery serpents, others were swallowed by the earth, others became lepers, and of all who had left Egypt, only two,

Josue and Caleb, reached the promised land; all others died, leaving only those born during the long years of wandering.

This offense of the Israelites, alas! is frequently found amongst Christians. Not only do they murmur against fellowmen, against superiors, against officials and against laws, but also against God and His divine providence. Nothing in creation quite suits us. Sometimes it is too warm, then again too cold; sometimes there is too much rain, at other times too little; in short, we are constantly criticising and murmuring. Is it to be wondered that Our Lord should be displeased with us? There is a person, for instance, visited with a painful disease; he is murmuring against God, when as a fact the disease is more wholesome to him than his health would be; for according to the will of God it will bring him in due time to a confession of his sins and to a sincere repentance. Others are battling with poverty and want and murmur against God, but do not consider that their poverty offers them a golden opportunity to gain a greater reward in the hereafter. A great writer of the Church says: "God has commanded us not to murmur and complain; but has man ever obeyed this command? We go so far as to be dissatisfied even when God gives us what we ask for." Is it to be wondered at then that the punishment of God is so often sent to the world? "Who hath resisted him and hath had peace?" says Job. Let us be careful then that we no longer murmur against God and His holy ordinances. He ordains all things according to the eternal plan of His wisdom and mercy, and arranges all things for the best, even if we in our shortsightedness can not understand. He sends sunshine and rain, heat and cold, storm and hail, as He thinks best, and no one has a right to complain; for He is the Lord and we the servants. He is our Father and chastises us for our sins and leads us to repentance and amendment. Instead of murmuring when the hand of God is upon us, let us rather kiss the hand with which He chastises us and consider that it is done for our eternal salvation. St. Peter exhorts us: "Be you humbled therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in the time of visitation: Casting all your care upon Him, for He hath care of you" (I. Peter v. 6-7). "Murmuring," says St. Bernard, is a great sin; heaven receives no one who murmurs." Let me close with the words of St. Paul: "And do ye all things without murmurings and hesitations; that you may be blameless and sincere children of God, without reproof" (Phil. ii. 14-15). Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Spiritual and Material Welfare.

"Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught."—Luke v. 4.

SYNOPSIS.—The Saviour did not give thought to the material needs of the apostles until after he had ministered to the spiritual needs of the people. A lesson for us that we should give attention to the welfare of the soul before that of the body.

In to-day's gospel we are told how the Saviour entered the ship of Simon Peter and taught the multitude from the ship. When He had ceased speaking He said to Simon: "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught." And when they had done this they caught a great quantity of fish, so that their net broke. And they beckoned to their partners that were in the other ship, to come and help them. And they came and filled both the ships, so that they were almost sinking. We see here that our Saviour first taught the multitude, tending to their spiritual needs, and only after that He allowed thought to be given to the needs of the body, reminding us that the care of our soul is more important than the care of our body.

It is a sad but too frequent experience that people bend all their efforts to their bodily needs, and neglect altogether, or nearly so, the salvation of their immortal souls. From early morn till late at night they work to gain riches; not only the poor, actually compelled to work, but also the wealthy already blessed with earth's treasures. They are never satisfied and strive to heap riches upon riches. And in all this scramble for riches they neglect the salvation of their poor souls. Many even forget that they have an immortal soul, and so never try to keep it free from sin and adorn it with virtues and merits. Let them meet with disappointment in business affairs and you see them worried and disconcerted, but they are not the least concerned if they lose the necessary sanctifying grace and with it their claim upon heaven. Who can count the many people so anxious for their temporal welfare and neglecting the welfare of their soul? And yet our Saviour warns them: **"What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the**

loss of his own soul? Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you."

God gave us an immortal soul, but a body that is perishable. It is the will of God that we first of all care for our souls. The soul is incomparably more precious than the body, and the welfare of the soul more important than food and drink, house and raiment, gold and riches, health and amusement. All these things are vain and for a time only, but the soul, the image of God, purchased with the precious blood of Christ, is destined for life eternal. If you lose money this loss may be made up, but if you lose your soul, *you* are lost for all eternity. And though you may be poor in worldly goods all through life but rich in virtues of the soul, your poverty will not interfere with your eternal happiness; for your possession is God and the right to heaven. But though you be rich and prosperous all your riches can not open heaven for you if your soul lacks virtue and merit.

Let us therefore first seek the kingdom of God and His justice. Above all things look after the salvation of your soul, so that in the hour of death you may not have to say with Peter: "We have labored all the night, and have taken nothing": i. e., we have labored in the night of sin, and have gathered no treasures for heaven. What profit will your wealth be to you at the hour of your death? All your wealth you must leave behind; your sins, however, will accompany you before the judgment seat of God, and He looks not upon wealth but will judge you according to the merits of your soul. Remember the words of our Saviour: "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?"

Nor must the poor who work for their daily existence forget that they have an immortal soul; let them do their work to the greater honor and glory of God, so that God may reward them. Cling not to the vain things of this world, do not misuse your wealth, but apply it to your own salvation by giving alms to the poor, so that you may gather treasures for the kingdom of God. The salvation of our souls is our first and most important duty; let us attend to it without ceasing so that we may gain life everlasting. Amen.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Strike at the Root.

"I say to you that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment."—Matt. v. 22.

SYNOPSIS.—Anger the root of great evils and to avoid sin it is necessary to strike at the root. Examples: St. John and King Herod; Moses. The occasion of sin, a root of evil that must be exterminated in our lives. Scandal must be guarded against. Purpose of amendment without avail if efforts do not accompany it.

In to-day's gospel we learn that our Saviour forbids His disciples to be angry with their fellowmen. He says: "Unless your justice abound more than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. You have heard that it was said to them of old: thou shalt not kill. And whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you that whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment." I beseech you therefore, not to allow yourself to harbor anger, because it is a grave sin and the root of great evil. And if we wish to prevent a malicious and poisonous plant from growing and doing harm we must destroy the root. Let us consider this to-day.

In order to drain a well it would do no good to pump out the water unless the source from which the well is supplied is also stopped. Again, if you wish to put out a fire you will not be satisfied if the flames cease but you will be careful of live cinders from which a new fire may start. Likewise it is necessary, in order to avoid sin, to destroy the roots from which sin springs. "If you do not exterminate the root of evil," so we are told by St. Bernard, "you are not sincere and you may rest assured that your vices will grow unrestrainedly." At King Herod's court adultery and immorality were rampant, because the king himself led an immoral life and set a bad example. To exterminate this evil St. John, therefore, went to the king and pointed out to him the evil of his ways, realizing that the example of the king was the root of the sinful living of his subjects.

We have another example in Moses. When Moses had ascended Mt. Sinai, the people required Aaron to make them a false God,

Aaron thereupon fashioned a molten calf from the gold that they had gathered and they worshiped it. When Moses, returning from the mountain, beheld this idolatry he destroyed the idol by fire. He might have used the gold for other purposes but decided that the danger of further idolatry was not overcome unless he utterly destroyed its root, the golden calf. Our Saviour thus exhorts us: "If thy right eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee. For it is expedient for thee that one of thy members should perish, rather than that thy whole body be cast into hell." Our Saviour does not say if thy eye scandalize thee turn it away; He says pluck it out. It is not sufficient for you to say I shall avoid sin; you must avoid the danger and occasion of sin, you must lay aside your bad habits, and thus exterminate the root of sin. Remember, as long as you are not firmly resolved to avoid the occasion of sin you are not in earnest about your conversion. If you sincerely wish to root out sin, avoid the occasion, no matter how difficult it may be; avoid the house, the company, the person through whom you have been led into sin. If the servants of your house are scandalizing your children, root out the evil, and discharge the servants so that your children may no longer be scandalized. If there are immodest pictures in your house, away with them, though they may be called works of art. If you have books or receive papers in which your holy religion is attacked and ridiculed, do away with them, that no one in your house may take scandal. It is not sufficient to make a firm purpose of amendment, there must be efforts to root out the bad habits and evil inclinations from your heart. If you have made a habit of lying, cursing, slandering and the like, you must use the means prescribed by the Church to master these sinful habits. Only by doing this will you root out the evil of sin.

Let us often and humbly pray to Our Lord for grace, for without His grace we can do nothing. Let us pray that He may enlighten us to realize our wicked inclinations and our sins, that He may strengthen us to avoid the occasion of sin, to lay aside our bad habits and walk in the path of virtue. And as for us, let us bend all our efforts and strength to accomplish our duty as it is made known to us through the grace of God. Amen.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

God's Blessing.

"They did eat and were filled; and they took up that which was left of the fragments, seven baskets."—Mark viii. 8.

SYNOPSIS.—The miracle related in to-day's gospel should remind us of the power of God's blessing and of our need of the same. Why this blessing is sometimes lacking. It rests with us to obtain this blessing.

A great multitude of about four thousand people had followed our Saviour into the wilderness to listen to His words and to witness His miracles, and for three days they had been without food or drink. The gentle Saviour took compassion on these people, and directed the disciples to feed them, but there were found only seven loaves of bread and a few fish. And taking the seven loaves and the fishes, He broke and gave to His disciples to set before the people; and they did as He bade them. "And they did eat and were filled; and they took up that which was left of the fragments, seven baskets." The blessing of God had multiplied the food, and I wish to point out to you to-day how powerful and necessary the blessing of God is in all our undertakings.

People plan, work and worry to gain earthly riches; but our daily experience teaches us that all our efforts and troubles are in vain if the blessing of God is not with us. What does it profit a farmer to have diligently tilled his fields, if the crop is destroyed by hail? All his work has been in vain. "Therefore," says the apostle (I. Cor. iii. 7), "neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase." We read that Jacob said to his father-in-law Laban: "Thou hadst but little before I came to thee, and now thou art become rich: and the Lord hath blessed thee at my coming" (Gen. xxx. 30). He means to say: not through your work alone did you become rich but because the Lord blessed thee. The same is said of the house of Putiphar because of Joseph; "The Lord blessed the house of the Egyptian for Joseph's sake, and multiplied all his substance, both at home and in the fields" (Gen. xxxix. 5).

Remember this, my Christian people, you, who from early morn till late at night struggle for earthly goods and in spite of all are not successful in obtaining them. Why do you not succeed? Be-

cause the blessing of God is wanting. Some people lack this blessing because they endeavor to obtain earthly riches in an unjust manner, and the blessing of the just God can not be with the unjust. Godfearing people are careful to avoid anything not acquired by lawful means, as we see in the example of Tobias who said to his wife Anna, who had brought home a young lamb, "Take heed lest perhaps it be stolen: restore it to its owner, for it is not lawful for us either to eat or to touch anything that cometh by theft" (Tobias ii. 21).

Solomon tells us there are some that distribute their possessions and grow rich: others take what is not their own, and are always in want. Treasures unjustly obtained shall profit nothing. The blessing of the Lord rests upon the just, and the blessing of the Lord maketh men rich (Prov. xi. 24; x. 2, 6, 22).

Others, again, lack this blessing because they do not ask for it; they neglect prayer and divine service, and they do not thank God for His graces.

Then there are those who are not blessed because they neglect the salvation of their souls and offend God by leading a sinful life. Because of sin this earth was cursed. And whoever serves sin must share the curse and forego the blessing. Therefore our Saviour says: "Now if thou wilt hear the voice of the Lord thy God, to do and keep all his commandments, all these blessings shall come upon thee and overtake thee. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed in the field. Blessed shall thou be coming in and going out" (Deut. xxviii. 1).

This should be a lesson to us as to what we must do to share the blessing of God. Let us remember that, although we may work and struggle, all our work will be in vain if God does not bless us. To partake of this blessing, live in the service of God. "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God, and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." The more zealous you are in the service of God, the more careful to avoid sin, the more anxious to provide for the salvation of your soul, the more confident you may be that God will bless you and your undertakings. Avoid injustice, for "the blessing of the Lord is only upon the head of the just." Do not cease to ask our Lord for His blessing, begin your work in His holy Name, and thank Him for favors bestowed upon you. Then will be fulfilled in you the words of Solomon, "The blessing of the Lord maketh men rich." Amen.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

False Prophets.

"Beware of false prophets."—Matt. vii. 15.

SYNOPSIS.—Two lessons from to-day's gospel: (1) Suffer not others to harm your souls. (2) Do not harm the souls of others. The disguises of false prophets. A false prophet the one professing to be a Christian but who leads a sinful life. Faith alone can not save you, works are necessary: a Christian life.

With these words our Saviour warns us, in the first place, to beware of false prophets, who come to us in the disguise of friends, but He also points out the truth that faith without good works will not avail.

I. Not without good reason does our Saviour warn us "to beware of false prophets." "If the good man of the house did know at what hour the thief would come, he would surely watch, and not suffer his house to be broken open" (Luke xii. 39). Far more dangerous than thieves are false prophets, for they rob us not only of earthly wealth, but they strive to destroy our immortal souls. You would flee from a person afflicted with a contagious disease; still more you should shun false prophets; for "their speech spreadeth like a canker" (II. Tim. ii. 17). Who are these false prophets? Those who come with a sham religion pretending to have the truth. False prophets, furthermore, are the unbelievers who mock and scorn the laws and practices of our holy religion, and who endeavor to spread doubt and unbelief among those who still have the faith. False prophets, alas, are to be found everywhere, in town and village, on the street, in the house. False prophets speak to you in irreligious and immoral books, and they try by every means to sow the seed of unbelief. How necessary, then, the warning of our Saviour: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matt. vii. 15). "There are some that trouble you," says the apostle, "and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach a gospel to you besides that which we have preached to you, let him be anathema" (Gal. i. 8). Therefore beware of false prophets, who seek to destroy your faith in Christ the Son of God; hear them not,

but believe in the teachings of Our Lord Jesus Christ and of His holy Church.

False prophets, again, are the seducers of innocence. They also come to you in the clothing of sheep, that is, they pretend to be friends and to be concerned about your welfare; they flatter you and are seemingly anxious to serve you, while they do all this only to conceal their foul purposes. Beware of these false prophets, they are worse than ravening wolves which can only wound and kill the body, but can not harm the soul; the seducers ruin the soul and cast it into endless misery. "By their fruits you shall know them," says our Saviour. And the seducers you will know by their improper talk and actions, deeds of darkness, which are punished with eternal damnation. "By their fruits you shall know them."

II. Our Saviour says: "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven: but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." With these words Christ warns us that in order to be saved, it is not sufficient merely to believe all the Catholic Church believes and teaches, but that good works are also necessary. As a good tree is known by its fruit, likewise you shall know a Christian by his good works, the fruits of a firm faith. A Christian who does not perform good works is not a good Christian, and without good works he can not be saved. For "every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire." God asks not only faith of us, but that we live a holy life, i. e., live according to His commandments. "For this is the will of God," says the apostle, "your sanctification" (I. Thess. iv. 3). "And that servant who knew the will of his lord, and prepared not himself, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes" (Luke xii. 47). St. Ambrose advises us that: "Faith alone is not sufficient; we must live up to the precepts of the Church; for he who wishes to gain possession of heaven must support his faith with good works."

What profit is it, my Christian, to be reared and raised in the true Church of Christ? What profit is it to defend one's religion before unbelievers and heathens? What profit is it to profess the faith—if the good works prescribed by the Church are not performed; if we are not humble and merciful, temperate and sober, truthful and loyal, honorable and respectable, in short, if we do not love God above all things and our neighbor like ourselves? Faith

can not save you if your works are against it, if you in fine words profess a faith which you deny by a life in sin and vice. "Not every one that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire."

Therefore "beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly are ravening wolves"; they desire to rob you of faith, virtue, innocence, peace of heart, and of eternal salvation; furthermore, take care that you yourselves may not be counted among the false prophets, by bearing the name of Christian but living a heathen life. If you truly wish to be a Christian you must live in a Christian manner, so that you may not receive the terrible sentence: "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire." May God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost preserve us from this terrible fate. Amen.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

A Clear Conscience.

"There was a certain rich man who had a steward: and the same was accused unto him, that he had wasted his goods."—Luke xvi. 1.

SYNOPSIS.—The unjust steward a type of the sinner who abuses the gifts of God. The steward was accused, so will the sinner be accused, and his most severe accuser is his own conscience. A guilty conscience a merciless torturer, a clear conscience a most precious possession.

By the steward, who wasted the goods of his lord, is meant the sinner who misuses the gifts and the goodness of God. The unjust steward was accused by some one unto his lord. Who accuses the sinner unto God? I might answer, with St. John (Apoc. xii. 10), that the devil accuses the sinners before God, day and night; I might say that our sinful deeds are our accusers before God; and even if our wicked deeds would be silent, our guilty conscience would not rest but would accuse us before God.

When Joseph was tempted to sin by the wife of Putiphar he said: "How can I do this wicked thing and sin against my God?" (Gen. xxxix. 8). Why did he say this? There was no one to betray him. He could have committed sin without being detected by a human being, but there was present an invisible witness, his conscience, and if he had sinned, his conscience would have betrayed and accused him.

When King David fled from Jerusalem, his men took with them the Ark of the Covenant; David, however, commanded them to take it back to Jerusalem. What made him do this? The Ark of the Covenant was held most sacred by the Jewish people. It contained the marble tablets on which the laws were written, and it was because David had often broken these laws that he did not care to have the tablets near him, as he feared his conscience would trouble him.

A guilty conscience leaves no peace to man; it accuses him; it startles him, it torments him, and ceases not to demand an account of the man's misdoings. Therefore Holy Scripture says, "The

wicked man fleeth, when no man pursueth; but the just bold as a lion, shall be without dread" (Prov. xxviii. 1). When Jacob returned to Mesopotamia, his brother Esau met him, with 400 armed men, and offered to accompany him as a protection against the surrounding enemies. Jacob, however, declined this protection. What a contrast! Esau to meet his brother finds it necessary to take 400 armed men with him for protection, while Jacob travels all alone through a strange land and even declines protection when offered by his brother. How is this to be explained? I will tell you. Esau was a wicked man with a guilty conscience and therefore he was in fear; Jacob, however, was a just man with a clear conscience and he feared not. "The wicked man fleeth when no man pursueth; but the just bold as a lion, shall be without dread." St. Ambrose tells us: "A guilty conscience is a daily and everlasting judgment. Even the daily courts of justice close at stated times, but the judgment of conscience never rests." Is not this our own experience? You who made money by unjust means, let me ask you, my man, does your conscience give you rest? Are you not at all times afraid that your injustice will be discovered and that you will be punished? And you, young man or maiden, you who associate with wicked companions, have you peace of heart? Does your conscience not constantly upbraid you? Are you not always afraid that your parents, or others, may hear of your doings and that you may be disgraced? A guilty conscience is so exasperating an accuser, so stern a judge, that we hear of men who have done great wrong going and giving themselves up to our courts simply because they can no longer endure their horrible pangs of conscience.

Therefore, if you do not wish to be accused by your own conscience before the judgment seat of God do what is right and avoid sin. The one who has a clear conscience need not be afraid of God or man. The knowledge that his actions have been blameless gives him great comfort, and helps him to bear his trials. Whosoever has a clear conscience need not fear death nor the judgment of God, for his conscience will not accuse him; on the contrary, it will defend him. If, however, you have a guilty conscience, if you have committed a misdeed that will not let rest or peace enter your heart, because your conscience constantly upbraids you; if on account of your sins you are threatened with the punishment of God, hasten to the tribunal of Penance, and confess your sin. It will be forgiven and you will regain your peace of heart. And you, my Chris-

tians, who possess a clear conscience, strive to preserve this precious treasure. Do not by thought, word or action expose yourselves to the accusation of conscience. Keep the commandments and walk in the path of virtue, so that at the hour of your death you may confidently look forward to the judgment and the kingdom of God. Amen.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Weep Over Your Sins.

"And when he drew near, seeing the city, he wept over it."—Luke xix. 41.

SYNOPSIS.—Three instances recorded in Holy Writ of our Saviour shedding tears. In this instance He weeps not over the coming destruction of the city, but because he foresees the disaster of the people. Has the Saviour cause to weep over you?

What an extraordinary spectacle is presented to our gaze in today's gospel! Jesus approached the city midst the joyful acclamations of the populace. Beholding the city from the heights above He wept and said: "If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace: but now they are hidden from thy eyes" (Luke xix. 42). Why did our Saviour weep upon this occasion? We will seek an answer to this question.

In Holy Writ are recorded three instances that our Saviour wept; once at the grave of Lazarus, again in the Garden of Gethsemani, where, as the apostle says, "in the days of his flesh offering up prayers and supplications, with a strong cry and tears, to him that was able to save him from death" (Heb. v. 7); and the third time upon the occasion of His solemn entry into Jerusalem. At the tomb of Lazarus, Christ wept over the stubbornness of the Jews who, notwithstanding so many miracles, would not believe in Him.

In the Garden of Gethsemani He wept, because His bitter Passion and death would be fruitless for so many; and now, at the sight of the city of Jerusalem He wept, not so much over the destruction of the beautiful city, which was so soon to come, but rather over the disaster which confronted the Jews on account of their unbelief and impenitence.

He saw at that moment the awful fate which hung over the city, its glorious temple and inhabitants, and He wept over it, saying, "If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace: but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee: and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee: and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone: because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation."

What was the cause of this awful fate? The blindness, stubbornness and hardness of heart of the people. Jesus, for three long years, had been in their midst, teaching and working miracles, and His every step had been marked with blessings. He urged the sinner to turn from his sins; promised him His grace and mercy; He threatened with divine wrath those who rejected His grace, but all in vain, they would not believe and repent, but obstinately remained in their unbelief and their sins. And worst of all, the measure of their iniquities would now soon be filled for they were going to crucify their divine Benefactor. Jesus was at this time making His last visit to Jerusalem; a few days more and the same Jews, who now were leading Him into the city as a king, would burden Him with the heavy tree of the Cross, lead Him out of the city and nail Him to this Cross, the while deriding and mocking Him.

All this the Saviour foresaw, and tears flowed from His eyes. And why should our blessed Saviour not have been sad, He who came to seek and to save that which was lost? Sin is indeed the greatest evil that can befall man. It is the obstacle to participation in the fruits of His redemption, it plunges man into temporal and eternal ruin!

Now I ask you, dear brethren, has the good Saviour cause to weep over you, as He once did over the Jewish people? Alas! if you commit sin upon sin, if you turn a deaf ear to every exhortation and invitation to do penance, if soon after you have been to Confession, you straightway go back to your old sins, then indeed has the Saviour cause to weep over you; for you offend your God, tread under foot the grace of redemption, crucify your loving Saviour anew, and cast your soul into eternal perdition. Then those words are applicable also to you: "If thou also hadst known, and that in this thy day, the things that are for thy peace!"

If you let this loving invitation pass unheeded, the divine forbearance may suddenly come to an end, and just punishment quickly overtake you. What ought you to do in order that the Lord may spare you? Do as the Saviour did. *He* wept over the sins of the Jewish people; *you* must bewail your own sins, repent and weep with penitential tears, and you will escape the chastisement awaiting you. You are exhorted to do this by Our Lord's words in the gospel of to-day: "If thou also hadst known and *wept.*"

Remember how the Saviour admonished the women of Jerusalem, saying to them: "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me;

but weep for yourselves, and for your children; for behold the days shall come wherein they will say to the mountains: Fall upon us: and to the hills: Cover us" (Luke xxiii. 28, 30).

Christ had no need of tears, for He was not a sinner, but the inhabitants of Jerusalem had need of them. If they had only wept for themselves they would have wiped out their sins, and have averted the sentence passed upon them, for the Lord through the prophet Ezechiel had said, "But if the wicked do penance for all his sins, I will not remember all his iniquities that he hath done" (Ezech. xviii. 21).

When Almighty God pronounced sentence upon King Ezechias, the king wept; and at once the divine sentence was changed. "I have seen thy tears, behold, I will add to thy days fifteen years" (Is. xxxviii. 5).

St. Chrysostom says therefore: "If in worldly courts you have been sentenced, you may lament as much as you will, you cannot escape punishment by your tears. With God, however, when you sigh sorrowfully with your whole heart, the sentence pronounced will be changed, and you will obtain mercy." He says, furthermore, "We may quench the glowing fire of our sins, not with much water, but with a single tear. Your sins are recorded in a book, your tears, however, are like an eraser. Let your tears flow, and your sins will be wiped out."

Dear Christians, we all have sinned before the Lord; we all deserve to be punished according to the gravity of our misdeeds, and we know not when His forbearance will come to an end and His justice be visited upon us. Let us then hasten to make use of the sole means of averting the wrath of the Lord, and of propitiating Him. Let us repent and bewail our sins so that we may find grace. There is yet time, the sun of salvation still shines, we yet can obtain grace and mercy; but beware of delay, for His wrath descends suddenly and destroys in the time of visitation.

Hasten your repentance in order that the Judge's sentence may be anticipated; let us judge ourselves, that we may not be judged; do penance, and thus avert the divine sentence. Amen.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

The Qualities of Good Works.

"I fast twice in the week."—Luke xviii. 12.

SYNOPSIS.—The example of the Pharisee instructive as to the qualities required to make our efforts meritorious. They are: Co-operation of Divine Grace; Performance in the state of Grace; Proper intention.

It is worthy of consideration, dear Christians, that the publican in to-day's gospel, though he had done much evil, left the Temple justified, while the Pharisee who acknowledged no sins, but boasted of his fasting and other good works, went home without the grace of justification.

Yet the angel Raphael said to Tobias: "Prayer is good with fasting and alms, more than to lay up treasures of gold" (Tob. xii. 8). Did not Christ Himself fast? The apostles and early Christians fasted likewise. Why then did the Lord not look favorably upon the Pharisee's fasting? If we read the sixth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel we shall find the answer; his good works lacked the conditions without which all our efforts have no merit in God's sight.

Now what are these all-important qualities?

1. If good works such as prayer, fasting, almsgiving and the like are to be meritorious, they must in the first place be undertaken with the assistance of divine grace; if the work is to merit a supernatural reward it must be accomplished not only with natural powers, but with the co-operation of the supernatural grace of God. The Council of Trent declares: "If any one says that man by his works, which are undertaken either in consequence of the urging of human nature or of the law, can be justified before God without divine grace through Jesus Christ: let him be anathema. If any one say that the divine grace through Jesus Christ is granted only that man may *more easily* live justly and merit eternal life, as if he could attain both of his free will without grace although with greater difficulty: let him be anathema. If any one say that man without previous inspiration of the Holy Spirit and without His assistance,

can believe, hope, love or do penance as he ought in order that the grace of justification may be bestowed upon him: let him be anathema."

From this you may perceive, dear brethren, how careful we should be to invoke the grace and assistance of God, if we desire to perform a work which should be pleasing to God.

2. Again, in order that good works may be acceptable to God and meritorious, they must, furthermore, be performed in the state of grace, for mortal sin renders man an enemy of God, and God cannot give heaven as a reward to His enemies. That the sinner's good works are not acceptable to God, and that He regards with favor only the good works of the just may be gleaned from the Scriptures. "The Lord had respect to Abel and to his offerings, but to Cain and his offerings he had no respect" (Gen. iv. 4). Why was this? Because Abel was just and a friend of God. Cain, however, was a sinner and an enemy of God. God regards not the person but the heart. If the heart of man is pure, man is a friend of God; his good works find favor before God, and merit a supernatural reward; when, however, his heart is stained with mortal sin, then his good works are not pleasing to God nor can they have any claim to supernatural recompense.

The following example will show us the truth of this. Our Saviour was one day at the temple in Jerusalem and saw the wealthy Jews throwing their offerings into the alms box; He saw also a poor widow casting in two brass mites, whereupon He said: "Verily I say to you that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all" (Luke xxi. 3). Why was her small offering of greater value than the large contributions of the rich? Because her offering was given with a pure heart, whilst the rich were wanting in this respect. "God," says the Venerable Bede, "regards not the size of the gift which is offered, but the heart of the giver." When the conscience is free from sin, then even the smallest work is meritorious and acceptable to God. Should the soul, however, be stained with a single mortal sin, then even the greatest of good works are worthless in God's sight and have no claim upon the eternal reward of heaven.

This is apparent also in an example mentioned by St. Gregory Nazianzen. Two brothers named Gallus and Julius had undertaken to erect a church over the tomb of the Martyr Amantis in such a way that each one was to build a certain portion of the

edifice. But the work progressed very unevenly. The part which Gallus was building rose from the foundations and was soon completed, yet Julius' work did not advance, for what was built by day was mysteriously destroyed again at night. The saint goes on to give us the reason for this: "Gallus," he says, was an upright, just and pious man, therefore his building was pleasing to God; Julius, on the contrary, although he appeared to be a good Christian, had a wicked heart, was addicted to sorcery, and inclined to be an idolater." Hence the Lord says: "Praise is not seemly in the mouth of a sinner" (Ecclus. xv. 9), and exhorteth us by the Prophet Isaias (i. 16), "Wash yourselves, be clean, take away the evil of your devices from my eyes; cease to be perverse, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge for the fatherless, defend the widow. And then come, and I will hear you and reward you according to your deserts!"

3. To be acceptable to God and meritorious, our good works must, moreover, be performed for the love of God, and with the intention of glorifying Him.

St. Thomas Aquinas tells us that "the merit of attaining eternal life is above all things to be ascribed to love; the other virtues merit the same, yet not of themselves, but solely by the power of love." St. Paul writes: "If I speak with the tongues of men and angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or tinkling cymbal. And if I should have prophecy, and should know all mysteries, and all knowledge; and if I should have all faith, so as to remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (I. Cor. xiii, 1-3). Yes, charity is so potent that it renders the most insignificant work meritorious. What indeed can be more trifling than to give a drink of water to a thirsty person? And yet Our Saviour declares that: "Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, Amen, I say to you, he shall not lose his reward" (Matt. x. 42).

You see, dear brethren, how our good works should be performed, so that they may be acceptable to God and deserving of the kingdom of heaven: they must have the assistance of divine grace, they must be performed in a state of grace and for the love of God. How unwise for us to remain, if only for a day, in mortal

sin, depriving our works of supernatural merit. What a misfortune, again, were we to perform our good works without one upward glance at God, without the proper motive! Let us then remove at once, and before it is too late, these obstacles, and follow the apostle's advice: "'All whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ" (Col. iii. 17). And: "Therefore whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do; do all things for the glory of God" (I. Cor. x. 31). Amen.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Blasphemy.

"And the string of his tongue was loosed; and he spoke right."—Mark vii. 35.

SYNOPSIS.—The nature and baseness of blasphemy. In other sins the culprit does not aim directly at his Creator, as he does in blasphemy. Therefore, so much greater offense. The folly of the blasphemer.

The Evangelist St. Mark in the gospel of to-day commends the deaf mute to whom the Saviour restored hearing and speech, not because he can now speak well and distinctly, but because what he said was right and just. As soon as the string of his tongue was loosed he commenced to praise and to glorify the divine omnipotence and mercy, and to return thanks to God for the benefit received. Dear brethren, we, too, have good reason to do likewise, for from our youth we have been blessed with the gifts of hearing and speech and we ought therefore to thank the Lord God, to praise and bless Him. Unfortunately, however, this good God receives too often, instead of praise, dishonor; instead of thanks, insults; instead of glory insolent blasphemy. What is blasphemy?

God is blasphemed when we speak with derision of Him, of His attributes, His providence, or of the saints and holy angels, when from anger or impatience we curse and swear or desecrate that which is most sacred.

When some one sins against his neighbor, there is not necessarily a wish to offend God. For instance, a man steals, quarrels, injures, and yet he may have no thought to offend God. The thief wants to get rich, the angry man wants to be revenged upon his enemy, the sensual man wishes to satisfy his passions, yet not one directly wishes to offend God thereby. But the blasphemer strikes at God, intentionally. Other sins are committed for the most part through weakness, frivolity or negligence, but blasphemy through malice. The impure seek in sinful pleasures the satisfying of their desires, the miser seeks money; the proud strive for honors; but the blasphemer finds neither pleasure nor profit in his cursing and swearing. Who can estimate the magnitude of the offense of blaspheming, cursing and swearing against the Almighty? An insult to a king is undoubtedly a more

serious affair than to offend a beggar, and it is infinitely more grievous to offend God than to offend a human being.

What is man, that he dare blaspheme God, and call down upon himself the wrath of the Lord? The Jews in the Old Law had such a horror of blasphemy that if ever they heard it, they closed their ears and cried aloud as if calling down the vengeance of God upon such crime. They tore their garments in order to show that the heart of man should be torn with sorrow, and that those who heard the blasphemer should mourn and lament at such a crime.

We read in the Bible that when the messenger of King Sennacherib blasphemed and reviled God, Isaias answered the offender: "Whom has thou reproached, and whom hast thou blasphemed? Against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thy eyes on high? Against the holy one of Israel" (IV. Kings. xix. 22). That same night an angel of God came and slew the camp of the Assyrians, one hundred and fifty-eight thousand men. The king returned to Ninive to invoke in the temple there his idol Nesroch, but was slain by his own son.

And what do we Christians do? If we were to rend our garments as often as we hear a blasphemous utterance, our garments would not remain whole for a day, for this sin is committed daily, even by some Christians. How often do we not hear blasphemy upon blasphemy in the public highways? Many workers in the fields or in the workshop curse and curse even without provocation. How many curse the poor unreasoning beast if it does not do exactly as they wish! How many those that think and speak offensively of God and His attributes! Very many again take an oath upon the slightest occasion. Others doubt of God's mercy, or sin presuming on that mercy. O rash sinner, what harm has your loving Father, your Creator, your Redeemer, your Preserver done to you? If you insult one equal to you you have to apologize and make satisfaction. If even man will not permit the defamation of his character to go unheeded, why should God suffer blasphemy to go unpunished? In the Old Law the Lord commanded that: "He that curseth his father or mother shall die the death" (Exod. xxi. 17). Now if any one who has cursed his earthly parents has merited death, what must he expect who blasphemes his heavenly Father? If God punishes those who take the name of the Lord in vain, what will become of those who blaspheme?

Take this to heart, my dear brethren, and avoid for the

future all blaspheming, scoffing, cursing and swearing. God is the best of fathers to us, and our greatest Benefactor, how then can we dare so to insult Him? Christ, the Son of God, has ransomed us at the price of His Precious Blood, and He is our Mediator and Intercessor with the Father; how may we ever offend Him?

When the holy Martyr Polycarp was urged to blaspheme Christ, he said: "For eighty-six years have I served Christ, and never did He harm me in the least; how can I curse and blaspheme Him who has always preserved me?"

We are informed by the Abbot Poemon that he once taught a young man, much inclined to blasphemy, to repeat in the time of temptation the following words: "I am tempted to blaspheme God, but I have no cause to do so." Neither have we any cause, dear brethren! Moreover we should strive as much as is in our power to prevent others from offending God in this way and renew this resolution as often as we say the "Our Father: hallowed be Thy name!" Amen.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Our Duties to Our Neighbor.

"Go, and do thou in like manner."—Luke x. 37.

SYNOPSIS.—The great virtue of charity demonstrated in the good Samaritan. Are we mindful of our duties to our neighbor?

In to-day's gospel the Saviour praises the gentle Samaritan, because he showed mercy to the man who, whilst on his way to Jericho, fell amongst robbers, who wounded him and left him half dead by the road side. Our Lord not only praises this Samaritan, but sets his conduct before us as an example, for He concludes with the words: "Go, and do thou in like manner." Accordingly we will to-day contemplate the Samaritan's compassion and strive for the future to walk in his footsteps.

There had passed by this poor man, who lay wounded and half dead in the road, a Jewish priest; he saw him, and went his way; in like manner there came also a Levite, and he saw him and passed on. Both of these were bound by their calling to help the unfortunate man, but they remained cold and indifferent. Then a Samaritan came, an unbeliever, who belonged to a people with whom the Jews did not associate. Hardly had he noticed the sufferer, when he was moved to compassion, went up to him, bound up his wounds, lifted him upon his own beast, took him to an inn and assumed the care of him. This unbeliever was the only one to show charity and compassion on the poor afflicted wayfarer. The sufferer was a brother in most urgent need of assistance; this was sufficient for the Samaritan, who asked no questions, but made every sacrifice for the sake of his fellowman.

Dear brethren! This man's conduct might well put us to shame! We are all brethren, not only according to nature, but also according to faith; we know through faith that the charity and compassion which we show to the poor and needy, are shown to Christ Himself. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" is God's commandment. We know that charity towards our neighbor is the distinguishing mark of a disciple of Jesus, as He Himself says: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for

another" (John xiii. 35), and we know, furthermore, that we shall obtain mercy at the judgment seat of Christ, if during our life we have shown mercy towards our poor and needy brethren. But to be frank what do we find? Many an oppressed man turns first of all to his relations, hoping there to find consolation and help, and with what result? He is turned away with a few cold words, and frequently instead of assistance he gets an undeserved reprimand, and an unkind refusal. When oppressed by trouble, we often find those whom we counted amongst our best friends, cold and unsympathetic, proudly disdaining to relieve our needs, just as the priest and Levite did in the case of the Samaritan.

Another, who has been visited by misfortune, or has no bread at home for a sick wife and hungry children, or whose creditors threaten him on every side, or who, throughout the bitter cold of winter, has insufficient covering and no fire in the grate, turns to his neighbors and acquaintances in his distress and begs for help; but what response does he meet with? He is listened to coldly and indifferently and finds himself an object of scorn. They speak as did the lawgiver in the gospel: "Who then is my neighbor?" What care I about others? I have enough to do to look after myself and family, and others must look out for themselves in this world. Yet let me ask, are these the sentiments of a Christian? No indeed! So spake also the fratricide Cain: "Am I my brother's keeper?" Thus spake, too, the unmerciful Nabal: "Shall I then take my bread, and my water, and the flesh of my cattle, and give to men whom I know not whence they are" (I. Kings xxv. 11)? Thus have spoken the hard hearted misers of all times, and for this they have received the punishment due them. It seems to me, too, that the priest and Levite in the gospel thought to themselves: "Why should I trouble myself about the stranger, lying at the roadside?" and to this day their unkindness and indifference shocks us. If the Samaritan had thought and acted as the priest or Levite what would have become of the wretched sufferer? He would have lain in his blood and died there, and the Samaritan would have borne off not the praise which the Saviour bestowed upon him, but a reputation as bad as that of those who neglected the wounded traveller. And what happens in these days to the hard-hearted and merciless men who remain cold and indifferent at the sight of the trouble and misery of their fellow creatures, who turn a deaf ear to the cry of the poor who beg of them a piece of bread, or an old garment or some other help in

their distress? The poor and needy turn away with a heart full of bitterness and animosity, or they perhaps curse the uncharitableness of these penurious and hard-hearted rich; God Almighty, however, records their hardness and unkindness in the book of retribution, and will not allow their conduct to go unpunished. In fact, God's justice can not permit uncharitableness towards the poor and oppressed to go unpunished. Aside from the fact that the miser and the uncharitable have no peace and no contentment, and no pleasure in their wealth, they are frequently visited by all kinds of misfortunes, sickness, and often premature death; yet the most severe punishment awaits them in eternity, as St. James tells us: "Judgment without mercy, to him that hath not done mercy" (James ii. 13). The rich glutton experienced this. Because he allowed poor Lazarus to be uncared for and hungry at his door, he died and was buried in hell. Now if God punishes so severely those who have no sympathy with the oppressed, what will be the experience of those who even go so far as to ill-treat the poor and oppressed? What will become of those who heap ridicule and contempt upon the misery of the poor and oppressed? "Judgment without mercy, to him that hath not done mercy."

Dear brethren, let us not content ourselves to-day with admiring the Samaritan's goodness and compassion, but let us for the future follow his example. Our Saviour bids us to: "Go and do in like manner." Have compassion upon the unfortunate, console the afflicted, help the oppressed, be generous to the poor! Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy! Do you hope that God may be gracious and merciful to you, do you trust in His help in your needs and troubles, do you wish for a favorable judgment? If so you had better bear in mind the Lord's injunction to follow the Samaritan's example, and you may be sure that a judgment with mercy will be yours, if you have shown mercy to your brethren.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Leprosy of the Soul.

"There met him ten men that were lepers."—Luke xvii. 12.

SYNOPSIS.—Sin, the leprosy of the body, pictured by the terrible malady of the body, referred to in the gospel. Destructive, disfiguring and not curable by natural means.

St. Louis, king of France, once asked a courtier whether he would rather be infected with leprosy, or with sin. The latter promptly answered he would prefer to be infected with sin. Louis severely rebuked him, saying: "You are greatly in the wrong, for what sort of leprosy could possibly be more horrible than sin, which will even continue to torture us after death. If you appreciate my favor you will have to change your mind upon this subject." Numberless Christians, alas, are of the opinion of this courtier; they will shrink from a disfiguring and painful sickness, from a temporary loss, or some other evil; but they have no horror of sin, and yet sin is an incomparably greater evil than all the temporal calamities that may befall us, because the latter cause suffering only to the body, while sin renders the soul wretched for time and eternity. Let us contemplate these matters to-day.

Leprosy is a terrible, disfiguring disease of the skin, met with frequently in the Orient. It is so offensive, and it so defiles the body, that healthy persons can not look upon those afflicted with it, without the greatest aversion and repugnance. Sin, likewise, so taints the soul of man, that God, as the Scriptures tell us, knows him nō more. The soul infected with sin is an abomination to God and His holy angels, for sin deprives man of all beauty, especially of the glorious jewels—innocence and divine grace. What a magnificent angel Lucifer before his sin, before he fell away from God! Afterwards, however, infected with the leprosy of sin, his splendor vanished, his beauty passed away and the grandest of angels became the hideous devil, so greatly had sin disfigured him.

Leprosy causes an unquenchable thirst. Sin, likewise, kindles an unclean and never-ceasing craving of sensuality, of avarice, of pride, of envy, intemperance and indolence; the sinner knows no rest

by night or day, and the more he slakes the thirst of his unclean desires, committing sin upon sin, the greater become his evil desires. "There is no peace for the wicked."

Again, bodily leprosy destroys the most precious senses of man—sight, hearing, taste. In a similar manner the leprosy of sin destroys man's spiritual powers, darkens his reason, perverts his will, causes him to turn a deaf ear to the inspirations of divine grace, spoils his taste for divine things and renders him indolent and lazy in the doing of good works.

Leprosy, in conclusion, is a malady which is incurable by natural powers. And so with sin. It can not be eradicated or cured by any act on the part of man—indeed, if all the angels and saints of heaven were to offer up their good works and merits, to efface a single mortal sin, they would not suffice. For the wiping out of sin, the precious blood and the infinite merits of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, were needed and so Christ became Man, out of mercy to redeem us from sin.

From this, you will perceive, dear brethren, what a hideous thing sin, the leprosy of the soul, is, and how abject and lamentable is the condition of those who suffer from it. How many among us are probably afflicted with this disease? In the place where our Saviour tarried, according to the gospel of to-day, there were ten persons suffering from leprosy. Are there any spiritual lepers present here? Any of the proud, avaricious, envious, sensual, intemperate? Any who have sinned by thieving and cheating, by impure thoughts, words and works, through lying and calumny, cursing and swearing, uncharitableness, unkindness and in other ways? May they understand how sin disfigures their immortal soul, making it hideous before God and heaven. Would that they reflected upon the unutterable misery into which they plunge their soul, so as to seek to be healed as quickly as possible.

And what must they do in order to be healed? The very same those ten lepers did in order to be delivered from their leprosy. They knew that no human being could cure them, and, therefore, they turned to Jesus, the kind Friend and Healer of the sick, raising their voices and saying: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" We, too, when our soul is sick with sin, have no other physician and helper than Jesus, who came to seek and to save that which is lost. He calls us to Him: "Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavily burdened, and I will refresh you!" And if we, filled with

repentance and contrition, cry out to Him: "Jesus, Master, have mercy upon us!" then will He answer: "Go, show yourselves to the priests"—that is to say, go to the priests, confess your sins contritely, and forgiveness will be granted you in My name.

Let us turn our attention to this at once, dear brethren, in order that the leprosy of sin may not bring on our eternal ruin! Turn without delay to the saving remedy of penance so as to be saved! And then let us be cautious in future so as not to relapse into the same sickness. The warning uttered by the Prophet Moses, applies to us as well. "Take heed that the plague of leprosy descend not upon thee!" Yes, let us take heed, watch and pray that we may not fall into temptation, or stain our souls anew with sin. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." Amen.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

The Poor and the Wealthy.

"Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and his justice: and all these things shall be added unto you."—Matt. vi. 33.

SYNOPSIS.—The Saviour's warning against undue solicitude for earthly needs concerns alike two classes: the poor and the wealthy. The former should accept their lot with resignation to God's will, and remember that our Saviour shared their station. The many promises made to the poor. The wealthy should carefully guard against the temptations to sin and injustice which their position affords.

In the gospel of to-day Our Saviour counsels us against an excessive solicitude for the necessities of the body, and exhorts us to be more solicitous for the soul's welfare, in order that we may obtain the kingdom of God. "Seek first," He says, "the kingdom of God, and His justice and all things else, food and drink, shelter and clothing and whatever else you require shall be given you. Your Father in heaven who cares for the birds of the air, and the flowers of the fields, will neither forsake nor neglect you, for you are of more value than they." There are two classes of persons worrying about earthly things with an immoderate solicitude, and they are (1) the poor, who are without earthly possessions and who strive to obtain them, and (2) the rich, well-provided, but never satisfied, whom I should like to admonish to abandon the burden of their cares or at least to reduce it to proper dimensions.

1. As far as the poor are concerned they should shun discontent and thank God that He gives them daily all that they require for their support. "Godliness with contentment is great gain," says the apostle. "We brought nothing into this world; and certainly we can carry nothing out. But having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content" (Tim. vi. 6-8). God cares no less for the poor than for the rich, on the contrary the Scriptures assure us that God has a predilection for the poor, espouses their cause, defends and protects them from real harm. "Do no violence to the poor, because he is poor; and do not oppress the needy in the gate; because the Lord will judge his cause: and will afflict them that have afflicted his soul" (Prov. xxii. 22, 23). "To thee is the poor man left," says the Psalmist, "thou wilt be a helper to

the orphan" (Ps. 10, 14). And God Himself says: "By reason of the misery of the needy, and the groans of the poor, now I will arise; I will set him in safety; I will deal confidently in his regard" (Ps. xi. 6).

Not alone in the Old Law has God assured the poor, by the mouths of patriarchs and prophets, of His favor and grace, but also and even more in the New Law; for He sent His only begotten Son into the world for their sakes, enjoining Him to announce the Gospel first of all to the poor. Replying to the disciples of John the Baptist, Christ bid them to tell John that "the poor have the Gospel preached to them" (Matt. xi. 5). As if He would say: "The fact that I love the poor, and teach and instruct them, is a sign that I am Messias, and the Son of God." For this reason, too, He chose a poor maiden for His mother, a poor carpenter to be His foster-father, and an humble stable for a birthplace. He elected poor workingmen and fishermen to be His apostles. He Himself was poor throughout His life, living upon alms. St. James exclaims: "Hearken, my dearest brethren: hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which God has promised to them that love Him?" (James ii. 5). Who, dear brethren, can reflect and ponder over these words and may still be discontented with an humble position, with his poverty and cares? Who may still be solicitous about riches, when he knows from the unerring lips of eternal truth, that God has so great a love for the poor?

We all have to struggle and strive in order to merit heaven; for, "the kingdom of heaven suffers violence," as the Saviour says, "and only those using violence will bear it away." The fewer our temporal cares the easier it is for us to win in this combat. The rich are heavily laden with temporal cares which oppress them, and they are so involved in earthly concerns, that in many cases they either lose sight of eternity altogether, or at least neglect it; the poor are free from this troublesome burden imperiling their eternal happiness, and they can even by patience and contentment merit heaven. This is evident from the answer which our Saviour gave to the youth who asked what he must do in order to be saved. The Saviour said to him: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;" and when the youth assured the Saviour that he had kept them from his youth up, Jesus said: "If thou wilt be perfect go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and come, follow me." When the youth heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great

possessions. The Saviour noticing this said to His disciples: "Amen, I say to you, that a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you: It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xix). If Jesus Himself, the Son of God, declares that it is difficult for the rich, and easier for the poor, to enter into the kingdom of heaven, is it not a grace of God to be poor? Who would still be too anxious and unduly worried about earthly possessions? "For they who would become rich, fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition" (I Tim. vi. 9). Do not complain, therefore, dear brethren, if God has given you an humble station, and no earthly possessions; thank Him, for it is a sign that He loves you; and when you are tempted to grieve about your lack of wealth, console yourselves with the words of the Holy Spirit: "Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasures without content" (Prov. xv. 16).

2. It remains for me to exhort the rich not to give themselves up inordinately to an all-absorbing care for that which is temporal. Who is not aware that the wealthy are worried with many cares? Some of them can never get enough, are always desiring for more, and others are continually consumed with fear of loss. They live the life of a miser. "There is but one," says the wise Solomon, "and he hath not a second, no child, no brother; and yet he ceaseth not to labor; neither are his eyes satisfied with riches, neither doth he reflect, saying: For whom do I labor, and defraud my soul of good things? (Eccles. iv. 8). And what profit has the possessor of many valuable things? "Sleep is sweet to a laboring man, whether he eat little or much; but the fulness of the rich will not suffer to sleep" (Eccles. v. 11). To all those, so immoderately solicitous for earthly goods that they can not even sleep, or take time to eat, the psalmist gives the good advice: "If riches abound, set not your heart upon them" (Ps. 61, 11). To possess wealth is not in itself a sin, but if all our thoughts and desires, plans and actions, are directed solely to the acquisition or preservation of riches, and if thereby we neglect and forget the salvation of our soul, or the duties we owe our neighbor, if we transgress the commandments of God and act contrary to justice and equity, then riches are for us a curse and not a blessing. For the very reason that so many wealthy persons are beset with these evils

the Saviour tells us "that it is difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven."

The patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, also a great many devout Christian princes and saints of God, were rich in earthly possessions, but their hearts were not attached to these things, they made good use of their abundance. Go and do likewise! Do not overlook your soul's welfare in all your anxiety about this world's goods! "For what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, but suffer the loss of his own soul?" Seek first the kingdom of God and His justice and all things else shall be added unto you. Give cheerfully of your abundance to the poor and needy and thus make friends for yourself, who will help you to gain heaven. Those of you, however, who have no earthly possessions, do not complain and grieve, but bear your poverty with patience and resignation in God's holy will, and thus work out your salvation. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," the Saviour assures us, "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Amen.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Weep Over the Sins of Your Children Rather Than Over Their Deaths.

"Weep not."—Luke vii. 13.

SYNOPSIS.—The Saviour's admonition not intended to reproach the mother for her sorrow, but to remind her not to lose confidence in God. The example of David who grieved not when his child died in innocent youth, but who was unconsolable when two sons died in their sins, should teach us to exercise the utmost care for the souls of our children.

An old legend tells us of an angel who in the form of a pilgrim accompanied an hermit on his wanderings.

On their way they passed a decaying corpse and the hermit held a hand to his nose. The angel asked him the reason of this, and the hermit replied that he could not endure the vile odor. Soon afterward they met a handsome youth in costly and sweetly perfumed garments seated on a fine horse. The hermit lingered so as to inhale the pleasing odor. The angel, however, turned away with evident displeasure, not deigning even to look at the youth. The hermit in surprise inquired the cause of this repugnance. The angel said: You must know that this youth's soul is stained with the filth of mortal sin and, therefore, the odor emitting from his soul is far more unbearable than even that of the vile-smelling carrion which we saw a few moments ago.

No doubt the young man of Naim was very unlike the youth just mentioned, otherwise Christ would not have bestowed upon him the favor to raise him from death to life. I imagine also that the mother was a pious and virtuous widow, who had brought up her son from his youth in the fear of God, according to the advice of the elder Tobias. Now that he was dead, she wept bitterly, and shedding tears followed his body to the grave. The Saviour met the funeral procession at the gate of the city and said to the sorrowing mother: "Weep not!" He then called the youth to life again, and restored him to his mother. Why should the Saviour have said to the mother: "Weep not?" Are parents not allowed to weep at the death of their children? Let us try and answer this question.

It is sad for a mother, especially a widow, to lose an only son in

the bloom of his youth. This young man was his mother's joy and comfort, her mainstay and protector, and now she was left alone, in a cruel world. Surely reason enough for tears! Are not tears a token of love, and if parents are in duty bound to cherish their children, why not shed tears of affection at the death of their children? The wise Sirach tells us: "My son, shed tears over the dead; and begin to lament as if thou hadst suffered some great harm, and according to judgment cover his body, and neglect not his burial" (Eccles. xxxviii. 16).

Dear brethren, the Saviour did not mean to forbid the sorrowing mother to weep over the dead body of her only son. By the words, "Weep not!" He reminded her that in her grief she must not lose her confidence in God. The same words may be addressed to those parents who, when a beloved child is taken from them, give way to uncontrollable weeping and grief, who even murmur at the dispensations of Providence. To such parents St. Ambrose says: "Why should you grieve when a beloved pledge is taken from you, did not the heavenly Father deliver His only Son to death for our redemption? If the Saviour were to enter a house of mourning where the parents sorrowed and grieved immoderately over the loss of a child, He would exclaim: "Weep not over the child, but weep over yourselves, for by your unreasonable love for your child and your uncontrolled sorrow you are sinning against God." As a matter of fact many parents would have more cause to weep over their own and their children's sins, than over the natural death of their children. To them may be applied the words of St. Anselm: "Weep for yourself, for the angels weep over you, all the saints weep over you, the drops of Christ's blood weep for you because you have sinned, and have done no penance for the evil which you committed." And St. Augustine exclaims: "O miserable man! thou weepest over a body whence the soul has departed, and thou weepest not over thine own soul, whence God has departed!"

These words should be taken to heart especially by you, indulgent parents, you, who smile upon your children's laxness and wrongdoing. If your little ones fall sick, you immediately call the physician and spare neither pains nor money to save them from harm. Yet if they transgress the commandments of God and the Church, and neglect prayer, divine worship, and the reception of the Sacraments, you do not weep, nor make the least effort to lead them back on to the right path; you are solicitous for their bodies, but for their

immortal souls you have no care. When David's son fell sick he was most anxious for his life. "And David besought the Lord for the child, and David kept a fast, and going in by himself, lay upon the ground." When, however, the sad news was broken to him that his little son lay dead: "Then David arose from the ground, and washed and anointed himself; and when he had changed his apparel, he went into the house of the Lord and worshiped: and then he came into his own house, and he called for bread, and ate" (II Kings xx).

At another time, however, his son Absalom prepared a feast to which the king's other sons were invited, among them Ammon, his first born son. During the progress of the banquet the servants of Absalom at his command fell upon Ammon and slew him. When this sad news was told David he wept bitterly, and tore his garments in sorrow, and fell upon the ground, and he mourned for Ammon during the remainder of his life.

A few years later Absalom incited a revolt against his father. He was overpowered in battle, took flight, and was found hanging to an oak tree choked to death. When David heard this, his grief was intense, and he cried aloud continually: "My son Absalom, Absalom my son, who would grant me that I might die for thee" (II Kings xviii. 33), and he would not be comforted.

What strange difference in David's behavior, dear brethren! David lost a most dearly loved child by death, while yet an innocent baby, and David wept not but was consoled; when, however, two of his wicked sons died, both of whom had disgraced his house by crimes he was unconsolable, so that he would permit no one to comfort him! St. Gregory explains this for us by saying: "David did not weep at the death of his beloved son, because he died in innocence: but he had every reason to lament the deaths of Ammon and Absalom because they were slain in their sins."

Take this example to heart, Christian parents! If a beloved child dies in his innocence, console yourself with the thought that God has taken your child to heaven, where he is better off than in this world of misery and sorrow, filled as it is with perils and temptations. You may then apply to yourself the words of the wise Sirach "Weep but a little for the dead, for he is at rest" (Eccles. xxvii. 10). What a difference, though, if you had the great misfortune to have a son or daughter die unrepenting in the midst of a sinful life! Therefore weep over the sins of your children, rather than over the loss of

an innocent child, for through their sins they imperil themselves and perhaps your own souls. Yes, weep bitter tears, and beseech God that He may grant you the grace and the strength to preserve your children, or to lead them back on to the paths of virtue and the fear of God. Remember that on judgment day the Lord will ask of you the souls of your children. Woe to him, who through lack of care lets sin play havoc with the souls entrusted to his guidance by God.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Watching Our Neighbor.

"And they were watching him."—Luke xiv. 1.

SYNOPSIS.—The Pharisees were watching Christ, not to observe His virtues, but to detect faults. If we are observing our neighbor to learn from him how to be virtuous, we are doing right; but if the neighbor is watched in order to detect his failings and to supply food for gossip, this would be following the footsteps of the Pharisees.

People are prone to take notice of bad things rather than of good, more likely to pay attention to the faults than to the virtues of their fellowmen. When Jesus went into the house of a certain man on the Sabbath day to eat bread, the eyes of the Pharisees were directed toward Him, and they watched closely to detect the slightest break of their customs, so as to condemn Him before the people. Although the Saviour saw the malice of the Pharisees, He sat down with them at table and thereby taught us a great lesson, because He did this in order to set them a good example. In watching their neighbor people do so either to imitate his virtues or to censure his faults. I will speak to you to-day about the watching of our neighbor's actions.

1. It is a good and praiseworthy thing to watch our neighbor, if we do so in order to imitate him in his virtues and in his good works. This is the easiest way to become pious and virtuous, namely, by diligently watching the good in others, and striving to imitate it. When St. Afra was still a pagan and a sinner, St. Narcissus called upon her one day. Afra noticed how he said grace before and after eating, and how modest and retired he was in his speech and carriage, and she was much edified, and took up conversation with him, which led to her baptism. A certain king of Poland carried his father's portrait with him so that by frequently gazing upon it he might be reminded to imitate his father's virtues. Who could count the many martyrs, from every station and age of life, who, in the early Christian era, by watching the heroism of the saints, were encouraged to suffer most cruel tortures, to confess Christ in martyrdom and death, and to win the crown of eternal life? As vice may be learned by watching the vicious, so also virtue is learned by observing the virtuous.

"The virtuous life of the just," says St. Gregory, "is placed before us as a model for an imitation." God in His solicitude for the salvation of souls has ordained that at all times, in every Christian community there should be found souls, whose exterior life is such that Christian virtues may be learned by the example of these holy souls. "The life of the devout is a living book."

As a matter of fact, dear brethren, no matter how perverted the world may be in general, there are always Christians among us who are free from this or that fault, who practise many virtues so that if we would only imitate them and strive for perfection we might soon exceed them in virtue. We may notice, for instance, that some one of our acquaintance attends Mass regularly before going to his work or office; or that some friend has a compassionate heart for the poor; another one bears patiently crosses and sufferings; this one gives alms liberally, that one does not shirk his duties, or does not use objectionable language, and we may very profitably follow in the footsteps of all these.

This is the proper way to watch our neighbor; but when we do so only to find faults to censure and slander, then we are walking in footsteps of the Pharisees, and sin against God and our neighbor.

2. Instead of watching and imitating the virtues of the Saviour, the Pharisees sought to detect faults, so that they might injure His reputation. And this is what, alas, a good many persons do. They are blind to the virtues and good qualities of their fellowmen, and have eyes only for shortcomings. When a fault is detected they are not slow to censure, at every opportunity their tongue is loosened, indeed very often they do not wait for an opportunity, but hasten to defame and to censure their neighbor on mere suspicion. Not content with telling what they know they exaggerate actual faults, and invent others. "A great many men," says St. Augustine, "do hardly anything else but pass judgment upon their fellowmen, to blame and deride them." They are like nasty insects that thrive only in dirt and mire, for they are ever busy with failings and scandals of their neighbors. And why is this so? Because they are filled with envy, jealousy, hatred or desire for revenge; they have not a spark of Christian charity in their hearts. "The sinner," says the prophet, "shall watch the just man; and shall gnash upon him with his teeth" (Ps. xxxvi. 12). A good and pious Christian does not seek his neighbor's shortcomings, and if he does notice any he seeks to excuse them; he throws the mantle of charity over them. "Charity,"

says St. Paul, "is patient, is kind; charity envieth not, dealeth not perversely, is not puffed up, rejoiceth not in iniquity, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (I Cor. xiii. 4, 6).

If those persons who are so anxious to find faults in others would turn their attention upon themselves, they would probably find more than enough to censure and improve; they see the mote in their neighbor's eye, but they can not see the beam in their own. Bear in mind the truth that every one, no matter who he or she is, is possessed of some good quality or qualities which, perhaps, easily escape attention, and yet are worthy of imitation. By paying attention to your own faults and shortcomings, and striving to amend them you will apply your time more profitably, and in a manner more pleasing to God, than by setting watch over the neighbor's doings, meanwhile neglecting the care of your own soul. Amen.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

The Love of God.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind."—Matt. xxii. 37.

SYNOPSIS.—The love of God consists of working and suffering. Many those who profess to love God, but their works contradict their profession. Good works the touch-stone of our love. Suffering for the love of God. Those who truly love God bear in patience and resignation the crosses that the Lord sends them. They that suffer with the Saviour will be glorified with Him.

We have here an explicit injunction of God that we must love Him: "This is the greatest and first commandment." Yet, if we consider the actions of mankind, we find so few who love God, that it almost appears it were impossible for man to fulfil this commandment of love. And yet it is not at all impossible. "Woe unto me," exclaims St. Augustine, "if I love not!" We can and must love God, not merely professing so with the tongue, but in deed and in truth. We can and must love Him, not half-heartedly, but with our whole heart; we can and must love Him, not only at certain times, as, for instance, at church, and when receiving the Sacraments, but at all times. "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind." Nor is this so difficult as many of us may imagine. To learn to love God only two things are required, namely: to work and to suffer. I shall explain this to you.

1. In order to acquire the love of God, we must work,—that is, we must avoid sin, and do good. "Whoso hath my commandments and keepeth them," saith the Lord, "he it is that loveth me." As the tree is known by its fruit, the bird by its song, the bell by its sound, so love proclaims itself by works. "The touchstone of love," says St. Gregory "is the practise of good works. Love is never idle; where it is present in the heart, great things are done." In order to give you a convincing example, just glance at Mary Magdalene, of whom the Lord Himself said that she had loved much! She endeavors to be with the Lord as much as possible; now she is at Simon's house, then in Bethany, afterward at the Cross, and we find her at the tomb of Christ; her love shuns no sacrifice and fears nothing. She

washes and embraces the feet of Christ, she remains at the Cross until her beloved Master's death, she hastens to the tomb and grieves that they have taken her dear Lord away. Again, look at Paul! What great things did he accomplish for love of God? Gaze up at the multitude of saints! Was any work too difficult for them when it was a question of proving their love of God? It is plain, therefore, that the more we love God, the more good works we shall perform to prove our love.

What can be said of those, who often transgress the divine commandment, performing no good works, seemingly living only to offend God? They claim to believe in God, they acknowledge that He has the right, as their Lord and Sovereign, to give laws, and that they are obliged to abide by the same; but alas, their works contradict this profession of their lips, and to them the words of the apostle may aptly be applied: "They confess that they know God, but in their deeds they deny him" (Titus i. 16). You say in your prayers: "My God, I love Thee"; but when the world with its mammon, honors and pleasures, allures you, when bad companions invite you to participate in forbidden pleasures, when your concupiscence entices you, do you then think of God, do you obey His commandments? If you do not you have not the love of God; you may love the flesh, the mammon, honor, pleasures, but you do not love God. When there is question of making a profitable business deal, of striking a bargain, of enjoying some pleasure, nothing seems too difficult for you; but when for the love of God you are called upon to deny yourself, to renounce some sinful desire, then, alas, the task is too often found an impossible one. "Love is never idle; when it is present in the heart, great things are done." Let alone the great things, let us see how it is with the small ones. Do you ever give small alms to the poor? Do you keep the prescribed fasts? Do you regularly hear Mass on Sundays? These are, indeed, small things, easily performed, and if you profess to love God let it not be said that you are unwilling to prove your profession even in the most necessary degree.

2. In order to love God truly we must suffer, that means we must be ready for love of Him to suffer as severely and to the extent that He find it expedient for us to do. True love is always ready to suffer. Sweet herbs give forth their most agreeable odor when mangled and crushed. So should our love of God grow stronger when we are

crushed by the visitations that the good Lord sends us for our sanctification.

We have no better example for this than St. Paul. His love of God was so great that he could confidently call upon all creatures to try whether they could extinguish this love within him. "Who then shall separate us from the love of Christ?" he asks: "Shall tribulation, or distress, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or persecution, or the sword? But in all these things we overcome, because of Him that hath loved us. For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers . . . nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus Our Lord" (Rom. viii. 35). And indeed, all his sufferings did not separate the apostle from the love of God; on the contrary he found joy and consolation in them because he was convinced that love is fostered by suffering. "I am filled with comfort, I exceedingly abound with joy in all our tribulation" (II Cor. vii. 4). You see here, dear brethren, what true love is capable of. If there is in us a dislike for crosses and sufferings, if we murmur and complain even at small troubles, can we say that we love God? No, because if we loved Him we not only should bear suffering and affliction with patience and resignation, but we should thank God for the opportunity to prove our love and thus work our salvation. We have seen that the whole mystery of love consists in working and suffering and I will conclude with reference to the words of the apostle: "Let us love God, for He hath first loved us!" Let us keep the commandments; for "who so hath His commandments and keepeth them he it is that loveth Him." God's commandments are not severe, His yoke is sweet and His burden light. Let us bear cheerfully and patiently the sufferings and tribulations of this life for the love of God who first loved us, for love of our Saviour who for our sakes suffered the most bitter death; for they who suffer with the Saviour—will also be glorified with Him. Amen.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Rash Judgment.

"And behold some of the Scribes said within themselves: This man blasphemeth."—Matt. ix, 3.

SYNOPSIS.—The rash judgment of the Scribes. We must not pass judgment upon our fellow-men, because, 1, appearances are deceiving, and ***2, we have no authority to pass judgment.***

The gospel of to-day tells us how a man, sick of the palsy, was brought to the Saviour by kind-hearted fellow-men, so that He might heal him, and the Saviour seeing their faith, not only healed him, but forgave him his sins. When the Scribes present heard the words: "Son, be of good heart; thy sins are forgiven thee," they rashly passed judgment and condemned Christ as a blasphemer, because He remitted sins, which alone is possible to God, and they said to themselves: "This man blasphemeth." Very frequently, dear brethren, you are guilty of passing just such rash judgment about your fellow-men, and I want to point out to you that this is a gross injustice toward your neighbor, firstly, because you are lacking in insight, and, secondly, because you have no authority to pass judgment upon your fellow-men.

1. Almost every one considers himself entitled to pass judgment upon his neighbor's actions, and yet we lack the insight and penetration to judge them correctly. To be able to do this it would be necessary to search his innermost heart, and to know his true intention, and this is not possible for us. We can merely judge from what we see and hear, and for this reason we are frequently mistaken in our judgment. When, for example, Joseph's brethren went to Egypt at the time of the famine to buy grain, Joseph, without making himself known, had a silver cup placed secretly in Benjamin's sack of grain. They were accused of theft and feeling safe of their innocence they offered that the one in whose sack the cup would be found should become Joseph's slave. The cup was discovered in Benjamin's sack, he could make no defense, although innocent, because appearances were against him. Nevertheless, was this a just sentence which was passed upon Benjamin? The cup was found in his sack, it is true, but had he stolen it?

He had not. You see, then, dear brethren, how easily we may be mistaken in judging our neighbor from mere appearances. Hence it is that even in our days many an innocent man is looked upon as a thief, a swindler, an immoral or intemperate man, and so forth, because he has been observed under what seemed suspicious circumstances. We err just as readily when we form an opinion about our neighbor according to hearsay, for we can not tell whether the remarks he made were with evil intent, in a hurry, as a joke, with the desire to hurt or not.

"Man," says the Scripture, "seeth those things that appear, but the Lord beholdeth the heart" (I Kings xvi, 7). We men form our judgment of others according to what we see and hear, but God beholds the heart and knows the intention. The intention alone determines the worth or guilt of actions. As we do not know the intention of our neighbor, as we can not see into the heart of man, we are therefore unable to pass just sentence upon our fellow-men. Who, for instance, is in a position to say whether a person's frequent visits to the church are not from real piety rather than hypocrisy? Whether he approaches the Sacraments because he is really pious, rather than to impress the people with his devotion? Who will say that one helps the poor not from motives of Christian charity, but with a selfish intention? That another one performs a good work not with a good but with an unworthy motive?

Mistakes are made frequently and an innocent neighbor is quickly given a bad reputation. One need only observe the daily actions of men to be convinced of this. One hears not merely the report of a neighbor's actions, but the man's motives are at once examined and criticized. They say that such a one goes often to church, but he does so to be seen by people; that another one practises Christian charity and tolerance, because he is anxious to be praised for so doing; this one is said to be industrious and busy, because he is greedy and a miser. And so the tale goes on. Thus many people usurp to themselves the right to a judgment which belongs alone to God, who can penetrate the hearts and minds.

2. We must not pass judgment upon our fellow-men, furthermore, because we have no authority to do so.

God has not given us the authority needed to act as judge over our neighbor. On the contrary, He has expressly forbidden us to pass judgment upon our neighbors. "Judge not, He bids us, and you shall not be judged; condemn not and you shall not be con-

demned" (Luke vi, 37). "Wherefore," exclaims St. Paul, "thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest" (Rom. ii, 1).

Who has set you as judge over your fellow-man that you dare to examine into his actions; censure them, and condemn him on account of his failings? Do you not know that there is a universal Judge, before whose tribunal all will one day have to appear, and who will punish or reward each one according to their deserts? "And thinkest thou, O, man," asks the apostle, "that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" (Rom. ii, 3). "No," replies the Saviour, "for with what judgment you have judged, you shall be judged; and with what measure you have measured, it shall be measured to you again" (Matt. vii, 2).

Avoid then in the future the forming and uttering of rash judgments about your fellow-men; judge not, that you be not judged; condemn not, that you be not condemned. "For charity," says St. Peter, "covereth a multitude of sins" (I. Pet. iv, 8). Amen.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Habitual Sin.

"And they would not come."—Matt. xxii, 3.

SYNOPSIS.—The summons of the King, a likeness of the call to grace, unheeded by those that have grown attached to sin, habitual sinners, who have no sense for spiritual blessings. A call to repentance, lest death overtake the sinner in his iniquity.

To-day's gospel introduces to us some very ungrateful men. A king made a marriage for his son, and he sent his servants out to summon them that were invited. But they would not come. Then he sent his servants once more to tell them that everything was ready, and bid them come at once to the wedding. But they neglected this second invitation and went their way, one to his farm, the other to his merchandise. In fact some even went so far as to lay hands upon the servants, maltreated and killed them.

By this parable the Saviour wishes to demonstrate the great guilt and culpability of those who will not heed the call of grace, who grow attached to sin and remain unrepentant. To fall into sin is wrong in itself, to make a habit of grievous sin, to grow attached to it, still worse; the worst, however, is when man remains impenitent in his sins. Let us take this matter under our consideration to-day, so as to incite ourselves to repentance.

A world-renowned philosopher was asked how many kinds of fools there were and he made answer: "I have noticed three kinds of fools: The rich who, with all their money, starve themselves; the aged who still indulge in frivolous pleasures; and the conceited who know everything better than any one else." To these three kinds of fools I think I ought to add a fourth, the sinner, who continues to live in his sins. Sinners are the most foolish of men; their hearts are so hardened that the inspirations of divine grace have no effect. Hence the Lord's plaint: "But they would not hearken: and they turned away the shoulder to depart: and they stopped their ears not to hear. And they made their heart as the adamant stone: lest they should hear the law and the words of the Lord" (Zach. vii, 11, 12). "A fool," says the wise Solomon, "receiveth not the words of prudence, unless thou sayest those things which are

in his heart" (Prov. xviii, 2). He will only listen to that which pleases him. St. Chrysostom explains this by a parable: "If," he says, "you throw grass to a lion or lead him upon a green meadow you will not excite his appetite, because it is not natural for him to eat grass; on the other hand, if you offer to an ox a piece of meat he will not want it, because it is not his nature to eat meat. And so, too, with an earthly minded man—if you speak to him of heavenly things he is not impressed, nor does he desire them, because his corrupt heart takes no pleasure in them."

He who commits sin repeatedly will gradually form a habit and it will become second nature to him. He commits sin without experiencing remorse of conscience, and if at any one time he form a resolution of amendment, at the very next opportunity he forgets this resolution and commits sin over and over. God's grace is not wanting to him. The sinner is exhorted by sermons, by his confessors, by parents and good friends. God oftentimes sends him suffering and affliction to arouse him from the stupor of sin, nevertheless he pays no heed, he turns a deaf ear; sufferings and afflictions have no effect, and the words of Solomon are confirmed: "The perverse are hard to be corrected; and the number of fools is infinite" (Eccles. i, 15).

If you preach to the hardened sinner of the great goodness and mercy of God, if you draw his attention to the Saviour who suffered and died for his sins, or remind him of the terrible consequences of sin for time and eternity, if you open hell to his gaze and show him the unspeakable torments of the damned: his heart is not moved, he remains cold and unaffected. "The perverse are hard to be corrected; and the number of fools is infinite."

When Theodosius upon a certain occasion reprimanded the wicked Emperor Nicephorus for his reprehensible life, and for the injustices he had practised upon his subjects, and exhorted him to penance and amendment of life, the latter said: "You must not expect anything from Nicephorus but that which you have seen." This is the answer of the sinner: "I can not give it up, I can not reform." "A hard heart," says St. Bernard, "will neither be crushed by contrition, nor softened by devotion; not moved by supplications, nor attracted by examples; it is not frightened by threats; blessings only harden it, punishment does not warn it; to describe this greatest of all evils in a few brief words: a hard heart minds neither God nor man."

And what will be the consequence? You may learn it from the following example: An astrologer once prophesied to Julius Caesar that he would die within the year, and that he should beware of the fifteenth of March. Julius Caesar minded the warning and caused himself to be well guarded. On the fifteenth of March he went to the Senate. On the way there he met the astrologer and called out to him: "The fifteenth of March is here, but where is the fate which you prophesied?" "This is indeed the day," replied the astrologer, "and it is not yet over." Caesar drove to the Senate, was there assaulted by conspirators, and slain. The astrologer had been acquainted with the plans of the conspirators and was therefore enabled to prophesy truly.

I will take it upon myself to prophesy to the impenitent sinner "Beware of death in sin," and do not let him say: "I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me?" (Eccles. v, 4). You know not what moment will be your last. If you rise in good health in the morning, there is no one who can assure you that you will retire at night in good health; for death often comes like a thief in the night. God is indeed good and merciful, but He is also just, and He may as a deserved punishment let you die in your sins. "God is not mocked" (Gal. vi, 7). He waits and sees whether we are converted and amend our lives: but when we turn a deaf ear to all exhortations to do penance, then His wrath comes suddenly, and He punishes us, according to our deserts.

Let us therefore not delay our repentance from one day to the other; let us at once be converted to the Lord, in order that we may find grace and mercy here and hereafter! Amen.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Faith and Works.

"And himself believed, and his whole house."—John iv, 53.

SYNOPSIS.—Many Christians born and brought up in the Catholic faith are inclined to give too little thought and appreciation to the gift of faith received by them. Faith will not avail without works. Walk in the path of the righteous and merit eternal happiness by faith and works.

When the Saviour healed the son of the ruler, who had approached Him with such great confidence, this man believed and his whole house. We, dear brethren, all believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and are, without any merit of ours, members of the Catholic Church. Many Christians, however, live more or less thoughtlessly in the faith wherein they were born and brought up. They seldom or not at all contemplate the end and aim for which God has created them, and the means they ought to employ to attain this end. Let us consider this matter to-day.

1. Every one, dear brethren, knows that he has not himself to thank for existence and life. These come from God. "I made the earth," said the Lord, "and created men thereon" (Is. xlv, 12). If asked for what end God has created them, some would be silent, not knowing what to say, others would make answer that they were in this world to toil honestly for a living, and to take care of themselves and their families. People may not say this in so many words, but their actions prove conclusively that they have no higher aim than the satisfying of their earthly necessities and wishes; for their whole thought and actions, from early morning till late at night, are directed toward that which is of this earth; they give no thought to the salvation of their poor souls. To them are addressed the words of the apostle: "They confess that they know God, but in their deeds they deny him" (Titus i, 16). You must admit, dear brethren, that such persons whose every thought and deed tend only toward worldly things, resemble the unreasoning animals. St. Augustine remarks correctly: "He who thinks of nothing but his earthly life is like unto the unreasoning animal." Man, however, is created to the image of God, and he has an immortal

soul. Not so the animal, and consequently man must have another and a higher vocation.

To what vocation have we then been created, and why are we living upon this earth? God has given us life in order that we may know Him and serve Him and thereby render ourselves worthy of the eternal life which He will grant us after a good life on this earth. Man is created to God's image, and he lives that he may merit heaven; therefore, we should be solicitous, not so much for the gathering of treasures here below, or an honorable and pleasurable life for ourselves, but rather for obtaining our proper goal, which is heaven. Hence the Saviour's exhortation: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. vi, 33). Mark well, dear brethren, that the Saviour does not bid you to seek first the necessities of this earthly life, riches, possessions or pleasures, nay, He commands: "Seek first the kingdom of God and his justice," that means, first and above all things, strive to attain heaven; for to this end you were created, and for this you were redeemed; for this cleansed from sin in holy Baptism, and adorned with sanctifying grace. "But now being made free from sin," says the apostle, "and become servants to God, you have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end everlasting life" (Rom. vi, 22).

What means should we make use of in order to attain this end?

2. The first means to attain our end is faith. "Without faith," says the apostle, "it is impossible to please God: for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and is a rewarder of them that seek him" (Heb. xi, 6). Through faith we attain to the knowledge of God; for faith teaches us that God, our Creator, our Redeemer, our Saviour, our highest good, is our last end and aim; faith teaches us that God rewards the good and punishes the wicked, and exhorts us, therefore, to love God, and to serve Him, to shun evil, and to do good. Faith also teaches us to know the various obstacles arrayed against us on our path to heaven; it draws our attention to temptations and perils which threaten us; it supplies us at the same time with the means to overcome these obstacles, and to withstand temptations and dangers.

It would take a longer time than I can devote to it this morning to explain this further; I will only ask, do you make use of all the means which the Church offers you so abundantly for your salvation? Do you believe that which the Church presents for your

belief, and do you listen with good will to her exhortations and warnings? You may reply: "Yes, we believe everything that God has revealed, presented for our belief through His holy Church." But I say with St. James: "What shall it profit, my brethren, if a man say he hath faith, but hath not works? Shall faith be able to save him?" (James ii, 14). No, faith alone can not save us; we must also practise our faith by works; we must manifest our love of God by keeping His commandments. Hence the Saviour answered the young man who asked Him: "Good Master, what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?" "If thou wouldst enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. xix, 16, 17). Faith, therefore, is the foundation of our salvation, and in order to attain this salvation we must lead a good, Christian life and endeavor to become rich in good works; for we are told that not every one who says, "Lord, Lord," "will enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven."

What will it avail you, dear brethren, to have been born and brought up in the true Catholic faith, if you do not live as Catholics, if you do not practise the works prescribed by faith? You can have no hope of ever attaining your true vocation if you continue to be more solicitous for the temporal than for the eternal, to care more for body than for soul. Without good works, dear brethren, we can not enter into heaven.

Let us begin at once to work out our salvation. Like the ruler in the gospel, we believe with our whole house; but let us also with our whole house serve the Lord! Let us walk in the path of the Divine Commandments in order that we may attain our end, which is everlasting happiness! Amen.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Offenses Against God and Against the Neighbor.

"And his lord, being angry, delivered him to the torturers."—Matt. xviii, 34.

SYNOPSIS.—God long suffering and merciful to sinners, but severe against those who do injury to their neighbors. He requires man to be generous and merciful, as He is toward man. As God regards offenses offered to Him less than acts of unkindness toward others, so let us resent insult against God, by sin, rather than injury done to ourselves.

The parable in to-day's gospel places vividly before us the goodness and mercy of God. By the king who required an account of his servants we should understand God, ever ready to wipe out our sins if only we pray to Him with contrite hearts. We all are God's debtors, and with every new sin a new debt is incurred against His justice. As the king remitted the whole debt to the servant who begged him to do so, in the same way God forgives our sins if we cry for pardon. The king, so merciful toward the *one* servant, was exceedingly severe upon the *other,* even delivering him to the torturers, and it may be asked how this agreed with his goodness and mercy? If we duly consider the circumstances we shall see that this is but a further proof of his goodness, because he would not allow the servant who had generously been forgiven to go and be merciless to a fellow-servant.

God is truly merciful to sinners and ever ready to forgive those who may justly expect forgiveness and we will now examine who they are.

So as to convince ourselves that God is exceedingly merciful toward the one who has offended God by sin, but extremely severe upon him who treats his neighbor harshly, we have only to review the life of the Saviour. Countless insults He endured during His life from the Jews and pagans. Nevertheless He did not punish His enemies. "He opened not his mouth: he was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and was dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he did not open his mouth" (Is. liii, 7). He not only forgave all these injuries, but even prayed to His heavenly Father to forgive them: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" If, how-

ever, injury is done to us, by our fellow-men, the Lord says: "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of my eye."

St. Chrysostom tells us: "The king was not angry when the wicked servant owed ten thousand talents and had compassion upon him, but when the latter was cruel to his fellow-servant He called him a wicked servant, and delivered him up to the torturers. So will the Lord forgive sins committed against Him, but He will punish injuries done by us to our neighbor." An example for this truth we have in Cain. Cain had a dispute with his brother Abel about the sacrifices they offered to God. Abel had sacrificed the best of his flocks, Cain, however, the poorest of his fruits. Therefore, God was well pleased with Abel's offering, but not with that of Cain. Cain became angry and slew his brother. Cain thus offended God by becoming angry against the Lord for not approving of the sacrifice, and sinned against his brother by slaying him. God reproved Cain mildly for his murmur, but when Cain slew his brother Abel, then God showed Himself as a severe judge and revenger of injured innocence. "Where is thy brother Abel?" asked the Lord. And Cain answered: "I know not; am I my brother's keeper?" And the Lord said to him: "What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the earth. Now, therefore, cursed shalt thou be upon the earth, which hath opened her mouth and received the blood of thy brother at thy hand" (Gen. 4).

Great, indeed, is the love of God toward men! He prefers them, as it were, to Himself, feels the wrongs done to them and punishes such offenses more severely and rigorously than those against Himself. And what is the reason? St. Chrysostom explains it, saying: "So that we may endeavor to act in the same manner. Just as He forgives gladly when man offends Him, but punishes injuries done to us by fellow-men, so ought we regard as most serious the offenses against God, rather than those offered to us." And what could be more reasonable? There should be no injury or offense so great that, after the example of Almighty God, we should not be willing to forgive it, especially since the Lord will as a just judge chastise the wrong done us by our enemies. We should, moreover, feel deeply, and strive to prevent, even the least offense against God.

This is how we ought to act, but, alas, how different is our behavior! We claim that we love God; but how do we prove this?

Do we grieve over the sins by which God is offended? Do we not all too readily give way to anger and desire revenge when injured by our neighbor? God is daily dishonored by serious sin and we remain indifferent; the slightest harm done to us, however, upsets us. Where do we find nowadays an imitator of David, who exclaimed in holy zeal: "Who shall rise up for me against the evil-doers?" (Ps. 93, 16). Where are the parents and superiors who seek to prevent the sins of their children, or punish them as deserved? Where are those who in the company of scoffers and the unchaste defend truth and virtue? Do we feel just as sensibly the offenses offered to God as if they were our own? If we love God, we shall imitate Christ and our sins shall be forgiven and we shall reign in peace with God.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Dignity and Duty of the Christian.

"Whose image and inscription is this?"—Matt. xxii. 20.

SYNOPSIS.—The attempt of the Pharisees to ensnare Christ. His action.
I. The dignity of the Christian shown (1) from the dignity of Christ, (2) His sufferings and death, (3) joint heirship with Christ to the kingdom of God, His Father.
II. The duty of the Christian, (1) gratitude, (2) good life.
The testimony of Scripture on this point.

The Pharisees, the never-tiring enemies of our Saviour, consulted among themselves how to ensnare Him in His speech. They asked: "Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar or not?" Had our Saviour answered "yes," they would have accused Him of being a friend of their hated Roman masters, and had He answered "no," they would have made a complaint against Him as an enemy of the same. Jesus, however, would not allow Himself to be confounded. He asked to be shown a coin and then said to the Pharisees: "Whose image and inscription is this?" They answered: "Caesar's." Then He said to them: "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God, the things that are God's." My dear Christians, in the same way as the coin bears the image and inscription of an emperor or king, so do we bear the image of God, the King of kings. Through the suffering and death of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, we became the children of God and members of His Church, and as such we bear the inscription of Christ, i. e., we are Christians. This is a great honor and grace, as I will endeavor to point out to you.

I. In order to make the first Christians comprehend this great grace, St. Peter used these impressive words: "But you are a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people: that you may declare his virtues, who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (I Peter ii, 9). We have received an even greater grace than the first Christians; we were not heathens first and then became Christians, but even as infants we were received into the Church of Christ through the Sacrament of Baptism. So even at the time when we were unable to pray, God had chosen

us to be His children. Should we not therefore exclaim with the Psalmist: "He hath not done in like manner to every nation: and His judgment he hath not made manifest to them." While a great multitude of men on this earth languish in the darkness of error and ignorance, and do not know the true God and Jesus Christ, we are "the chosen generation, a holy nation, a purchased people." What is the consequence? We must, as St. Peter says, "declare the virtues of Him who has called us to his marvelous light;" i. e., we must make our gratitude known by a true Christian manner of life, proclaiming the virtues of Him who has called us to His marvelous light of faith. Therefore our Saviour admonishes us: "Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Alas! How few Christians are there who show their gratitude by leading a life according to the tenets of their faith. That we are Christians is therefore a great honor for us, which we should gratefully acknowledge by a truly Christian life.

II. Our inscription, or name, "Christian," we have received from Christ, because we believe in Him and hope to be saved through Him. According to the Acts of the Apostles the followers of Jesus were first given the name of Christians at Antioch. It is a great honor to bear this name, for it means that we are beloved children of God and are the heirs of God, if we live good lives according to our name. We received this name in Baptism, when we were cleansed from sin, and adorned with sanctifying grace, when we were received into the bosom of the Church and therefore became children of God and heirs of His kingdom. "Behold," said St. John, "what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed, that we should be called, and should be, the sons of God" (I John viii, 33). The children of the world consider themselves fortunate, and pride themselves, if they are descended from a king or a princely family. The Pharisees boasted of their descent from Abraham. "We are the seed of Abraham," they said to our Saviour (John viii, 33). Our descent and Christian nobleness is far more distinguished. We can say: "God is our Father through Christ," and with confidence say: "Abba, Father" (Rom. viii, 15). See what love our Father has shown us that we are called and are children of God. "For the spirit himself giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God, and if sons heirs also; heirs indeed of God and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. vii. 16, 17). Can there be a greater honor and dignity

than to be a Christian? Do we properly esteem this honor and dignity? Do we live as Christians? We bear the name of Christ and hence must endeavor in our thoughts and actions to become like Him. For He has said: "I have given you an example, that you may do as I have." Do we conform ourselves to the example of Christ? Are we devoutly disposed as He was? Do we, disregarding everything else, strive for the kingdom of heaven? Are we gentle, humble, patient, kind, pure and just as Christ was? Alas, there are so many that are Christian in name only; they possess few or none of the virtues in which Christ set the example, and which we should make our own. Can such hope to become heirs of God and dwell with Christ? Must they not rather fear that their end will be eternal destruction?

If heretofore we have not been grateful to God for the grace of being called to the true faith, if we have even brought dishonor and shame upon our Christian name, let us in future thank God for this grace and value the honor and dignity which the name Christian bestows. Let us turn our attention to Christ, "the author and finisher of faith" (Heb. xii, 2) and endeavor to follow His footsteps, so that in the hereafter we may also bear His image on our souls and share His kingdom for all eternity. Amen.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

The Contemplation of Death.

"Lord, my daughter is even now dead."—Matt. xix. 18.

SYNOPSIS.—Death must come to all. Death around us is meant as a warning to us. The contemplation of death teaches (1) the just the value of an innocent and holy life, (2) the sinner the danger he is courting and the value of penance, (3) all Christians the necessity of a penitential life and the need of being always prepared.

No man shall be spared from death; the mightiest king must die and so must the beggar. And yet how few people ever think of this unavoidable end. We are daily reminded of death, and we are surrounded with the symbols of destruction. "The graves and the ashes of the dead preach," said St. Augustine, and yet we do not pay any attention to their warning. In to-day's gospel our Saviour speaks of death. A certain ruler came to our Saviour and addressed Him saying: "Lord, my daughter is even now dead." What does the death of this girl teach us? In her death she calls out to us: "You that are just, if you wish to remain innocent, think of death! You who are sinners, if you wish to be converted, think of death! You that are penitents, if you wish to persevere, think of death!" Let us contemplate these truths and implore God that they may serve to our profit.

I. Death admonishes the pious and just: "It is better to die in innocence than to lose it by sin. But the just man, if he be prevented with death, shall be in rest" (Wisd. iv, 7). Therefore if by God's decree we are destined to a long life in order to advance in virtue and merit, let us exclaim with pious Job: "Till I die I will not depart from my innocence" (xxvii, 5). And indeed they that speak so, and act accordingly, need not fear death, for it is only a passing over from a life of misery to a better and everlasting happy existence. The pious Nieremberg on his death-bed exclaimed: "I should never have imagined how sweet death is." What causes such happiness to pious souls at the hour of their death? It is their God-fearing lives. A pious life, however, has its origin in the frequent thought of death; for this thought leads us, as St. Gregory remarks, to a pious life, prevents sin, and promotes virtues. Holy Scripture

admonishes us: "In all thy works remember thy last end and thou shalt never sin!"

In the monastery at Clairveaux, where St. Bernard spent many years and where he died, they placed graves at the crossroads so that the monks passing by were reminded of death, that they might be strengthened in virtue and kept free from sin. If we would follow their example and often think of death we should likewise lead a pious life and there would be no need of fearing death.

II. To the sinner, however, death exclaims: How long do you intend to continue this sinful life? Go forth and behold the ashes of the dead! This one and that one has died, and your turn will surely come. Behold, there lies one who was proud. But a few days ago he considered himself above others and scorned them. His pride and fame have vanished like smoke which is visible for only a short time and then disappears. Here lies a vain maiden who by frivolous attire and costly clothes endeavored to attract attention. Loathsome worms are now feasting on the very body on which she bestowed so much care. Thus vanish the pleasures of this world. There is the grave of the unchaste youth, the bad girl, who indulged in sensuality. If you could see them now you would not use your bodies for sinful acts. There lie the remains of the miser who labored without rest by the sweat of his brow, to heap up ill-gotten treasures. This he has accomplished, but at his death he had to bequeath them all to his glad heirs and nothing was left him but his death-shroud and a coffin. His poor soul perhaps has perished forever. Can there be a more vigorous sermon than this one preached by death? And how few pay attention to it! People will indulge in all the pleasures that this life offers; they tirelessly gather wealth and riches, as though they would keep them for eternity, when death has already raised the axe to strike them a blow when they least expect it. Do not forget therefore that the hour of death will surely come for you, and the thought of it will keep you free from sin so that you may save your soul for eternity.

III. Death, finally, admonishes the Christian not to delay his penance. Many postpone it from one day to another in the hopes of living a long life, but they are deluded; death overtakes them when they least expect it. These our Saviour warns: "They who do nc penance shall be lost." A holy man tells us of a lawyer who in an unjust manner had acquired an immense fortune, and when he became dangerously ill sent for him. The saint, thinking the sick

man wanted him to hear his confession and prepare him for death, began to speak of the danger of his illness, of death, and of the necessity of being reconciled with God. But the lawyer interrupted him saying: "Father, I did not send for you to hear such things, I merely wanted to ask you to become the adviser of my children after my death." The priest became alarmed and endeavored to convert the patient. But in vain, for he died shortly after without repentance. Sinners that neglect penance and defer it from day to day expose themselves to the danger of dying impenitent and in the state of sin. Death comes unexpectedly and therefore our Saviour admonishes us: "But this know ye, that if the householder did know at what hour the thief would come, he would surely watch and not suffer his house to be broken open. Be you then also ready; for at what hour you think not, the Son of Man will come" (Luke xii). Blessed are they that are reconciled with God by sincere penance and who have multiplied good fruits by their penance. "But he that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved" (Matt. x).

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

Venial Sin.

"The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven."—Matt. xiii. 33.

SYNOPSIS.—The folly of despising an enemy, great or small. Little things capable of effecting great results. Venial sins never make mortal sin, yet are to be avoided (1) because they displease God and are punished by Him, (2) because they render easier and surer the commission of mortal sin.

A famous old warrior warned his soldiers that no enemy, great or small, should be despised, and experience teaches us that great disasters are often worked by insignificant causes. A small spark, for instance, can set fire to a house and may cause the destruction of a city; a little leaven penetrates and acts upon a large quantity of dough. And as the leaven penetrates and acts upon the flour so does venial sin penetrate and infect the soul of man; it makes him (1) displeasing to God, and (2) it may lead him to mortal sin. I will endeavor to demonstrate to you the importance of shunning even venial sin.

1. No matter how great the number of venial sins which we commit they can not equal in guilt one mortal sin, because by committing venial sin we do not lose sanctifying grace as we do by mortal sin. Nevertheless we must not consider venial sins small and immaterial as many are inclined to do. Things that we like to consider of no consequence are not so considered by God: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts: nor my ways your ways," saith the Lord (Is. lv, 8). We ask, for instance, what harm can there be in an idle word? But God says: "But I say unto you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account of in the day of judgment" (Matt. xii, 36). Again, we do not consider a vain thought sinful. God, however, punished the vain thoughts of David by sending a pestilence over the land (II Kings xxiv). We do not consider a lie much of a sin, and yet God punished Ananias and Saphira for the same with sudden death. We think it of no account if we call our brothers fools, but God assures us that if we are guilty of such we shall be in danger of hell fire (Matt. v). And why should God neglect to punish small offenses when He has promised to richly reward even small good deeds? For instance, Rebecca performed a good deed by giving Eliezer and his camels

a drink of water, and see how richly she was rewarded (Gen. xxiv). The widow of Sarepta for giving her last loaf of bread to the prophet Elias was rewarded by God with a mysterious and inexhaustible abundance. It is a small matter to give a drink of water to the thirsty and yet to the giver our Saviour promises: "He shall not lose his reward" (Matt. x).

From this you may see, my Christians, that while God does not neglect to reward small good deeds, He also punishes us for committing small venial sins.

II. Venial sin often leads to mortal sin. He who considers venial sin a trivial matter will gradually come to consider mortal sins the same and will commit them without hesitation. "Of one spark cometh a great fire," says the wise Sirach (xi, 34), and the spark which easily causes in our hearts the fire of mortal sin is the thought that venial sin is but a trivial matter and that we must only guard against mortal sin. Therefore the wise Sirach says: "He that contemneth small things, shall fall by little and little" (Ecclus. xix, 1). A merchant that scorns small gain will in time suffer great loss. So it is with our souls: "He that does not heed small things will in time go to ruination." A learned writer says: "He that wishes to gain spiritual profits such as virtues, merits, and the heavenly crown, must, as a rule, heed small things, and not let any occasion pass of doing good and of acquiring God's blessing. The giant Goliath heeded not the stones which David carried in his pockets, and these little stones afterward threw him to the ground. Many of us from our own experience know that very often the sins we commit are the consequence of heedlessness. A young man or woman who associates with bad companions in time becomes accustomed to their evil ways, and joins in their sinful talk and actions. A person who is not honest in little things will rarely resist the temptation to be dishonest when richer gain can be made. "He that does not heed small things will in time go to ruination."

You see, therefore, my Christians, how venial sin, although a small matter, has very serious consequences; it makes us displeasing to and punishable in the eyes of God, and it often leads to more grievous sins. Let us therefore endeavor to avoid venial sin. "If I be master," said the Lord, "where is my fear?" (Mal. i, 6). And if we really fear God, we shall try to avoid offending Him even by venial sin, and endeavor to please Him not only in great but also in small things. Amen.

TWENTY-FIFTH AND LAST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST.

A Good Life, a Good Death.

"For as the lightning cometh out of the east and appeareth even into the west: so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be."—Matt. xxiv. 27.

SYNOPSIS.—To die well we must learn to live well. This is proved by the fate of Absalom, by the death of Herod and by the every-day experience of life. Habits formed in life are strong in death. A good life means a good death; examples, St. Stephen and all the saints. Reason says, while there is time choose the safest way.

A certain wise man upon being asked to give a definition of death said, "Death is the echo of life," which means, just as we live so we die; he that lives a pious life shall die a happy death; but he that leads a sinful life generally dies a bad death. Our utmost concern should therefore be to lead a pious life, for "as the lightning comes out of the east and appears even into the west," death appears and is followed by the judgment at which every one will receive his reward according to his deeds. Let us therefore consider this truth: that the manner of death is usually the same as the manner of life one has been leading, and let us implore God to grant us a happy death and a merciful judgment.

We learn in the Bible story how the wayward son Absalom opposed his father and intended to dethrone him. He had incited the people to riot and gathered an army to drive his father from his court so as to make himself king. David, however, assembled the soldiers that had remained faithful to him, and sent them to fight against Absalom. A battle ensued in which Absalom and his men were conquered and put to flight. Absalom in his flight was caught in an oak-tree by his hair, and one of David's warriors killed him as he hung from the tree. Absalom during his life had not concerned himself about his soul, and departed in this miserable state, for as we live so we die. St. Augustine says: "Just as the impious souls forget God during their lives so God will permit them to forget themselves in the hour of death."

In proof of this we find other examples in Holy Scripture. When King Herod felt his death approaching he sent for the nobles of his kingdom and ordered that they be made prisoners until after his

death, and then be strangled. Thus he was to his deathbed possessed of the same bloodthirstiness which induced him to kill the innocent children. There we see again that he who leads a sinful life dies a bad death, for death is the echo of life.

In the description of the famine and the destruction of the city of Jerusalem the prophet Jeremias relates how the starved and famished children asked of their mothers: "Where is corn and wine?" (Lament. ii, 12). A holy writer calls attention to the fact that these children ask for corn and wine, when they would have been glad to receive a handful of bran and a drink of water. And he adds: "From this we may learn that our thoughts and desires on our deathbed will not differ from the habits we have formed during life. If we commit sin often it becomes a habit and this habit we retain until death." Take for instance the miser. How often is he reproached for his nasty and sinful vice, how despised by neighbors, and yet he does not abandon his greed. On the contrary, as he advances in age he becomes more avaricious, and as he lives, so he dies. Behold the unchaste person. He often makes the resolution to reform, but just as often breaks it, because his sensuality has become a mastering habit. And so on with other vices. Therefore the prophet Jeremias exclaims: "If the Ethiopian can change his skin or the leopard his spots: You may also do well when you have learned evil." And St. Augustine says: "Of many thousands that indulge in a sinful life not one will truly turn to God at the hour of death."

Just as he who leads a sinful life generally dies a bad death, so he who leads a pious life will die a happy death. To prove this let us consider the death of St. Stephen. When his death sentence was pronounced those that were in court beheld his face glorified as if it had been the face of an angel (Acts vi). God wanted to show thereby that St. Stephen would die as he had lived; he lived like an angel, therefore he died like an angel. Why did the saints die a happy death? Because they lived a holy and virtuous life. Whoever lives a virtuous and God-fearing life will die a happy death because death is the echo of life. At the deathbed of a good Christian we may convince ourselves that he has no fear of death; confidently and hopefully he gives his soul up into the hands of his merciful God.

If we cut down a large tree it will fall on the side toward which it was inclined. If it was inclined to the right it will fall to the right. If it inclined to the right and we wanted it to fall to the left we would have to draw it to the left with great exertion. So too

with us. If during our whole life we incline ourselves to the side of virtue, we shall fall on that side in the hour of death, but if we incline to the side of sin, it is pretty sure that in the hour of death we will fall on that side, the side of damnation, unless by God's mercy we are drawn over to Him in the hour of death and thus saved from eternal destruction. But let us, while there is time, choose the safest way. Let us renounce sin, return to the path of duty, and lead a pious life so that we may die a happy death. "You will learn to die well," says St. Augustine, "if you learn to live well." On this last Sunday of the ecclesiastical year it is especially befitting for us to make the firm resolution to live well in the now beginning year so that if it is to be our last one, we may die a happy death! This may the merciful God grant us! Amen.

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

Preparation for the Coming of the Lord.

"Men withering away for fear."—Luke xxi, 26.

SYNOPSIS.—Why the Church reads the gospel of the end of the world. Christ came to save sinners but the sinner must repent and turn from his evil ways. The dreadful state of the sinner on the day of judgment. Example of Saul and Herod.

Exhortation.—Prepare for the coming of the child Jesus.

With this Sunday we enter upon a new ecclesiastical year, and the Church reads to us the gospel of the end of the world and of the last judgment, inviting us to make use of the present time of grace, so that on that awful day we may not wither away with fear, but may go forth to meet the Lord with confidence and joy. This admonition is reinforced by the austerity of the Advent season which begins to-day. It is a time of preparation for the coming of Our Lord and Saviour, by a sincere repentance and amendment of life; for though we no longer await Redemption, as did the pious of the Old Law, still we may only by penitential dispositions participate in the fruits of the Redemption. At this holy season the Church, therefore, exhorts us to be converted to God by a sincere repentance, so as to bear worthy fruits of penance. To this I would endeavor to encourage you to-day, and pray that God may grant to my words the power of drawing you nearer to Him.

To the question, Why did Christ come into the world? Holy Writ answers: "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke xix, 10). For this reason He calls Himself a good shepherd who seeks the sheep that have gone astray, in order to restore them to the flock, so that they may be saved from destruction. The sheep that have gone astray are the sinners; by their sins they have separated themselves from God, they walk in the paths of perdition and their end will be perhaps eternal damnation. The loving Saviour calls out to the sinner: "They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are sick" (Matt. ix, 12). Sinners are afflicted with grievous and mortal sickness of the soul—and to heal and save them the Son of God forsook the glory of heaven, became man, and died the agonizing death of the Cross.

St. Luke presents this to us in a parable. When a king visits a city, he says, the streets are carefully cleansed and everything is put in order. God also requires this attention; and He admonishes us through St. John, the precursor of Christ: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight his paths." "Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways plain" (Luke iii, 4, 5).

The hearts of all men should be cleansed from sinful dross, and adorned with virtue so that Jesus may make His entry therein and bestow upon them His grace and His peace.

It is necessary, therefore, for sinners to prepare the way of the Lord by a sincere repentance. The proud must bring low the mountains which they raise for themselves over others; the avaricious must renounce their unlawful love of money, and commence to love their brethren, the poor. The lukewarm and idle in God's service must begin to pray with fervor and to practise good works. That which is rough is to be made smooth by those who are wrathful, unkindly and revengeful; they must walk in the footsteps of Christ who was meek and peace-loving. Crooked ways must be made straight by those who have walked the paths of sin and vice. Thus all sinners must do penance.

And who of us, dear Christians, dare say that he has been without sin? Just take a glance at your inner life, and give an accounting to yourself concerning your thoughts, words and deeds! Have you soiled your heart and offended God by impure thoughts and desires, by envy and ill-will, through pride and pomp, avarice and greed? Have you perhaps used immodest language, lied, cursed, blasphemed, derided and calumniated others? Have you murmured and complained at sufferings and adversities? Did you hurt and offend your neighbor, or have you cheated and defrauded him? How lukewarm and cold some have been in God's service, how slow to fulfil the duties of their position and calling! How little good, and how much evil others have wrought! If you ponder over this, dear Christians, will you be able to say that the invitation to penance which the Church addresses to you in this Advent season does not concern you? And how can you have part in the fruits of the Redemption, how can you welcome the Saviour into your heart, if you have not removed the dross of sin by sincere penance?

Those, however, who refuse to repent will behold His coming on the day of judgment with fear and trembling. When God ap-

peared to Saul, graciously inviting him to be converted, Saul trembled over his whole body and from fright fell into a dead faint. What an awful spectacle will it be then to behold the Lord in His wrath, when in the clouds of Heaven He will appear in great majesty and glory to judge all men! Herod was sorely troubled even at the news of His birth. St. Augustine asks if as a helpless infant in the cradle the Saviour inspired the proud monarch with such fear, what terror will He arouse in the hearts of men when He shall come as a stern judge? What anxiety will take possession of the sinner, when the Lord will upbraid him with his deeds of vice, ending with the sentence of eternal damnation. Who will be able to bear the awful words: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire"! In despair they will cry out: "Ye mountains, fall upon us, and cover us, ye hills," but in vain, hell will open, and they will be plunged into it for all eternity.

Think well on it, therefore, dear Christian, how you may escape this terrible fate. A fearful judgment awaits you, if you allow the present time of grace to pass by unheeded; if you do not prepare by a contrite Confession your heart for your Saviour. Now is the time to obtain grace and to secure salvation. Remember that the Son of God came into the world as a little infant. "He is a child," says St. Bernard, "and therefore easily appeased." Give to the Divine Child a heart full of sorrow and contrition. He will be appeased, and you will be again the object of His love. "Who does not know," continues St. Bernard, "that a child gladly shares with those he loves? The Christ Child has the kingdom of heaven in His keeping. Approach, O Christian, and beg of Him the kingdom of heaven"! If you come with this petition and a heart filled with contrition and love, you will not ask in vain.

SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

The Message and the Chains of St. John.

"Now when John had heard in prison the works of Christ, sending two of his disciples, he said to him: Art thou he that art to come, or do we look for another?"—Matt. xi, 2.

SYNOPSIS.—I. Why did John send his disciples with such a message to Christ? He knew and believed in Christ. It was that Christ might help them and draw them to Himself.

II. God alone is our real helper: proven (1) by experience, (2) by reason. Therefore put all your trust in Him. Examples: Machabees and Israelites. The joy and blessing of bearing our burdens for Christ.

To-day's gospel contains many wholesome lessons from which I will select two for our special consideration. I will point out to you, why John sent two of his disciples to Jesus to ask Him who He was; and then, what the chains of John should teach us.

1. It may seem strange that John should send two of his disciples to Jesus, asking Him "Art thou he that art to come, or do we look for another?" We can not suppose that John did not know the Saviour for how could it be possible that the servant should not know his Master, the precursor his Messias? We know also that John had already acclaimed the Saviour as the Redeemer, in the words: "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world," and when he professed his unworthiness to loose the latchet of the Lord's shoes. Furthermore, when he baptized Jesus in the Jordan he had heard the voice of the Heavenly Father announcing: Thou art my beloved Son. Considering all this, we must believe that John knew Jesus to be the Son of God, the Saviour of the world, and that he believed in Him. John, therefore, did not despatch his disciples on this errand for the purpose of strengthening his own faith, but in order to let his disciples be confirmed in their belief and in their confidence in the Lord. John was in prison and foresaw his death; in order therefore that his disciples might not deceive themselves he sent them to Jesus, who alone could help them if men should contradict or persecute them. And this truth, dear Christians, which St. John recognized is also applicable to us. We can not depend on the favor and assistance of men; he who alone can and will help us, in good and evil days, is God, the Lord of all creation. The favor of

men is fickle; to-day we may have their good will and praise, they will assure us of their affection and assistance, and perhaps the very next day they may forsake us, yea, they may be heaping ignominy and derision upon us. A harmless word, a misunderstanding, or failure of fortune, is often enough cause to transform your best friends into enemies. Doubtless you have experienced this truth yourselves.

No, indeed, we can never depend upon human favor and help; God alone can help us, and He is willing to do so in our necessity and want. Hence the Lord says, too: "See ye that I alone am, and there is no other God besides me: I will kill, and I will make to live: I will strike, and I will heal: and there is none that can deliver out of my hand" (Deuter. xxxii, 39). As long as the Machabees had confidence in God, they were unconquerable, but when they neglected God and appealed to human aid, they were conquered and slain. And so long as the children of Israel placed their hope in God, He protected them with His mighty arm, but when they forsook God, they were also forsaken by Him. Let us, therefore, rely firmly upon the Lord's promises: "It is good to confide in the Lord, rather than to have confidence in man. It is good to trust in the Lord, rather than to trust in princes" (Ps. cxvii, 8, 9). "Blessed is he who hath the God of Jacob for his helper, whose hope is in the Lord his God" (Ps. cxlv, 5-9).

2. Let us now turn to the lesson taught us by the chains and fetters wherewith John was bound in his dungeon. "Blessed," says St. Chrysostom, "were those hands which touched the head of Christ at His baptism; blessed and hallowed the fingers which pointed out to the world the Lamb of God; yet they became far more blessed when for God's sake and the cause of truth and justice they were bound with fetters, or rather let us say adorned." To be fettered and ill-treated for God's sake, for truth and justice, is a high honor indeed. You will say: Thanks to God, we are no longer persecuted on account of our faith, nor put in chains on account of it. We are no longer thrown in prison because of our faith, yet every one has his chains and bonds to bear, and he will be blessed if he bears them patiently for God's sake. These chains and bonds that we have to bear are the obligations imposed upon us by our position and calling in life, they are the sufferings and afflictions that come upon us, they are the bonds with which the Commandments of God bind us. Married folk, for instance, are bound to one

another, and only death can loosen their bond; others may be oppressed by poverty or by other troubles, and there is no one, but has his little cross. If for the love of God, you bear all your bonds patiently, no matter how heavy they may be for you, then you shall be esteemed blessed as was St. John. If like St. John we bear with fortitude and patience, and for the love of God, the chains and fetters which our position and vocation in life, or adversity and afflictions, or the Commandments of God mean for us, then we, too, shall one day be received like John into God's eternal glory. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

The Virtues of St. John.

"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord."—John i, 23.

SYNOPSIS.—I. John's dignity seen from the terms applied to him in Holy Scripture.
II. The virtues of his life: (1) humility, (2) penance, (3) zeal for souls.
III. Exhortation to imitate John, especially at this season.

Of all the saints, the Blessed Virgin alone excepted, there is none praised so much in Holy Scripture as John the Baptist. It is said of him that he is more than a prophet, and that no greater has been born of woman: he is called a man sent by God (John i), an angel (Matt. xv), a preacher of penance (Luke ii), and a burning and shining light before the Lord (John v). Let us inquire in what way John attained to such lofty dignity and sanctity. If we peruse his life we find that he was chiefly noted for three virtues: (1) his profound humility (2) his penitential life, and (3) his zeal for God's glory and for the salvation of his fellowmen. Let us to-day contemplate these virtues so that we may endeavor to follow in John's footsteps.

1. How great the humility of St. John was is perceived in his preaching and in his actions. When the Jews sent messengers to John, asking him whether he was Christ, or Elias or some other prophet, he answered them: "I am not." And upon the question "Who then art thou?" he replied: "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord." He might have told them with truth: "I am a prophet," for Christ Himself had declared that he was even more than a prophet. But John was not seeking honor; the more others thought of him, the less he thought of himself. I am not Christ, said he, not Elias, not a prophet; I am only the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare ye the way of the Lord. And when Christ Himself came to him asking to be baptized at his hands, John sought to restrain Him and said: "I ought to be baptized by thee: and comest thou to me?" (Matt. iii, 14). "I am not worthy to loosen the latchet of thy shoes." See, dear Christians,

John, of whom Our Lord said that he was more than a prophet, whom he called an angel, another Elias, and of whom the Angel Gabriel prophesied that he would be great before the Lord, and that no man born of woman would be like unto him, this John considered himself of so little account, that he expressed himself as unworthy to loosen the latchet of the Saviour's shoes. But the more lowly John's opinion of himself was, so much the greater was he in God's sight. He who considered himself as unworthy to loosen the latchet of Christ's shoes had the glory and grace of touching His sacred head at Baptism. When we reflect upon this, dear Christians, should we not be ashamed of our own vanity and pride? We poor weak and sinful men, carry our heads high, look with contempt upon our fellowmen and expect of others respect and homage. Those destitute of talent would pass for fountains of wisdom; sinners want to be considered virtuous; we are indeed despicable and deserving of chastisement in God's sight, and yet we behave, like the Pharisee, as if we were the favorite children of God and not in need of His mercy. Let us learn humility from St. John. Without humility we can not acquire a single virtue, without humility we can have no hope that our sins will be forgiven, that our prayers will be heard; in short, without humility we can not be saved.

2. The other virtue which enabled John to reach so high a plane of sanctity, was his penitential life. Even in his youth he went out into the wilderness to lead a life of penance. His garment was of camel's hair, his bed the hard earth, his food locusts and wild honey, and his drink the water from a spring. Why did John leave his beloved parents and the joys and comforts of life? Why did he punish his flesh? Why watch, fast, and pray without intermission? The Church makes answer to this in the hymn of praise for the feast of St. John, and tells us that he led this penitential life in order to preserve the innocence of his soul; to keep himself free even from small sins. If this saintly John, to work out his salvation and to merit heaven, regarded it as necessary to practise such great penances, how much more reason have we to lead a penitential life! Hence the life of St. John cries out to us: Do penance, amend, be vigilant in watching, fasting and praying and in other works of penance; avoid the occasions of sin, for even if the kingdom of God is within our reach we can only become possessed of it by using violence. Let us take to heart, dear Christians, this exhortation of St. John,

especially as we approach the festival of Christmas, and let us prepare ourselves for the advent of the Lord by sincere penance.

3. John attained so high a degree of sanctity, finally, because he had an ardent zeal for the Divine glory and for the salvation of mankind. It was not enough for him that he was himself free from sin, his zeal impelled him to make others the same. He sent his disciples to Christ, in order that they might listen to His teaching, and behold His miracles, and be incited thereby to believe in Him and imitate Him. He gave good advice, and pointed out to the people the way and means to salvation. He condemned, without fear, the wicked King Herod, for the adulterous life he was leading, and his censures were so irksome to the king that St. John was made to suffer for them with his life. We should indeed take these lessons well to heart! Would that, like John, we might strive to promote the glory of God and the salvation of our fellowmen, so that not only we should avoid sin, but restrain others by word and example, and lead them on to the path of virtue!

We have seen, dear Christians, in what way St. John attained to so high a degree of sanctity. Now let us not content ourselves with merely admiring his virtues, but let us endeavor by profound humility, penitential life and zeal for God's glory and for our neighbor's salvation, to walk in his footsteps, in order that we may be deemed worthy to behold with him the divine glory! Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT.

Pride.

"Every mountain and hill shall be brought low."—Luke iii, 5.

SYNOPSIS.—I. God punishes pride. Example: the proud angels. Examples of sinners forgiven. No example of pride forgiven.
II. The attitude of the proud man—likens himself to God. Example: Herod.
III. Examine ourselves on this vice.
IV. The way to overcome it is by humility. Examples: Our Lord and His saints, especially John the Baptist.
V. Exhortation to prepare for Christmas.

The pagan poet Esop when asked what the heathen god Jupiter was supposed to consider his chief duty, gave answer: "He suppresses the proud." With even more reason we may say of the true God, that he suppresses the proud and punishes them. Hence Mary in her glorious hymn of praise says: "He has shown might in his arm: he hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble" (Luke i, 51, 52). This was the fate of the rebellious angels, who, dazzled by pride, desired to be like unto God. He expelled them from heaven, and for their punishment cast them into hell. And this was in fulfilment of the words in to-day's gospel: "Every mountain and hill shall be brought low."

Dear Christians, the feast of Christmas is before us, and the Church desires us to prepare ourselves worthily to celebrate it. For this it is needful not only to purify ourselves from sin, but also to lay aside our bad habits, and adorn our heart with virtues. Some may be proud and haughty. If you wish to participate in the fruits of the redemption you must bring low the mountains and hills of pride and practise humility. Let me show you to-day how God punishes the proud, hoping thereby to incite you to humility. May the Lord bless our meditation!

We read in Holy Scripture that God has granted forgiveness to many great sinners. So for example he pardoned the woman taken in adultery; the great sinner Mary Magdalen; the publican who with humility struck his breast and said: Lord be merciful to me a sinner; He forgave Peter who had denied Him; He pardoned the thief upon the cross; but we read nowhere that He bestowed His

pardon and grace upon a proud soul. While the humble publican was pardoned, the proud Pharisee, who had entered the temple with him, went home unjustified. Therefore St. Ambrose warns us "How great a vice is pride! Even adultery obtains forgiveness but not pride." "Pride," says the wise Sirach (x, 7), "is hateful before God and men."

Why then is pride so detested by God? For the simple reason that the proud soul wants to be like the Almighty. God is of Himself and has everything in Himself. The proud man would do likewise, he ascribes everything that he is, has and can do, not to God, but to himself. Notwithstanding that he received all he has from God, his spiritual and corporeal faculties, his powers, his wealth and prosperity, his honors and dignity, his good qualities and merits, he will not give the credit to God, but to himself, and he requires that all should respect, honor and extol him. Is it any wonder then that God punishes him?

Holy Scripture tells us that God severely punished the proud Herod, because he took unto himself the glory which belongs to God alone. "An angel of the Lord struck him, because he had not given the honor to God: and eaten up by worms, he expired" (Acts xii, 23).

And are there not among us some who may deserve a like punishment? There is the one whom God has blessed abundantly with earthly goods, who carries his head high, despises the poor, and expects that every one should honor and esteem him as a great man, and be subject to him. There is the woman, or young girl, who has a fair face or figure, and who seeks to enhance her attractions by finery and dress; she glances around, maybe even in the house of God, to see whether people are admiring her, and she feels hurt if she is unnoticed. There are others proud of their intelligence, or ability, or of their position, merits, or virtue, who look for honor, esteem and praise. If the Lord were to call them to account what would happen to them? Are they deserving grace and pardon? No. "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (I. Peter v, 5). So long as they continue in their pride, and so long as they do not perceive and acknowledge that of themselves they are, have, and can do nothing, so long as they give not the honor to God, from whom they possess everything, so long as they do not realize that they are weak, sinful men, so long can they find no favor before the Lord, and they merit to be punished by Him.

Dear Christians! We shall soon celebrate the blessed nativity of Our Lord and Saviour. The Church leads us into an humble stable and lets us behold there Jesus Christ, the Son of the Most High, as a helpless babe. The Son of God abased Himself so utterly that He chose to become man, and be cradled in a manger. Contemplating the Son of God in such abasement, can we still remain vain and proud? If He, the Lord of heaven and earth, esteemed earthly things of so little account, can we reasonably be pretentious about our wealth, our attractions, our talents? Let us never again raise our heads in pride, to deprive God of the glory which alone belongs to Him. We are in very truth poor, frail, sinful men; of ourselves we have nothing of which we may be proud. We can not even think a good thought of our own accord, still less do anything good. Let us put off then all pride and all haughtiness, humbling ourselves before the Lord so that He may exalt us. "Whoso abases himself," saith the Saviour, "shall be exalted, and he who exalteth himself shall be humbled." Let us acknowledge that we are sinners, so that we may find grace and forgiveness! Let us not put confidence in ourselves, but in God alone, who is the strength of the weak and who bestows the desire and the accomplishment of good works. Let us imitate the Saviour who has said: "Learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. xi, 29). The more humble we are the more pleasing shall we be to God, the more shall we increase in virtue and the more may we hope to be exalted one day. Amen.

THE SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS.

The End of the Year.

"And the child grew, and waxed strong, full of wisdom: and the grace of God was in him."—Luke ii, 40.

SYNOPSIS.—I. The end of the year calls to mind the purpose of life. The use of time—to prepare for eternity. David's appreciation of time.
II. The action of the two blind men of Jericho—they seized the opportunity.
III. God gives us time to invest it, as the merchant gives his son money.
IV. Self-examination on the use of time.
V. Exhortation to use it for our soul's good and the glory of God.

On this the last Sunday of the year it is proper that we ask ourselves whether during its course we have been solicitous for our soul's welfare, and whether, like the child Jesus, we have advanced in wisdom and grace as we have advanced in age. What answer can we give to this question? Alas, there may be many who, though they have grown older, have not become wiser nor better. They may have taken pains to become richer and of more importance, they may have been solicitous for pleasure and enjoyment, for good eating and drinking, for the comforts of life, for finery and dress, and troubled themselves about other things, but not about the one thing necessary, the good of their souls. While they have been growing older in years, and perhaps richer in worldly goods, their souls have remained poor, destitute of virtues and good works; possibly these poor souls are worse off now than they were in the beginning of the year, being stained with many additional sins and vices. And thus one year will succeed another, and their last hour will come before they are prepared for it; that awful moment when the Lord will call them for reward or punishment. Hence the pious King David prays: "Lord, teach us to count our days, that we may become wise." I, too, join in this prayer, and wish that to-day, at the end of the year, you may ponder how short and fleeting is the time which the Lord has accorded us, so that you may become wise, and apply yourselves to working out your salvation all the days of your life. Let us consider how brief and precious our time is, in order that, like the divine child, we

may hereafter increase in wisdom and grace as we advance in years.

When the Saviour was leaving the city of Jericho, two blind men sat by the wayside begging. When they heard that Jesus, followed by a large crowd of people, was passing, they cried aloud and said: "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us, and make us to see!" But the multitude wanted to silence their clamoring. They, however, would not be silenced and cried out the louder saying: "O Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" (Matt. xx). What was the reason that these blind men were so insistent in their cries? Had they been told that Jesus was going to stay at the place for a few days, perhaps they would not have been so insistent, they could then have found an opportunity to meet Jesus again; but when they heard that He was leaving, they did not want to let the time and opportunity be lost without making an effort to lay their troubles before Him. Now is the acceptable time, now is there a chance of getting well, we must not miss this opportunity. And as a result of their importunate cries the Lord halted and healed them.

We might well learn of these two blind men, how to appreciate the precious time which the Lord grants us, and employ it for our soul's good. Time flies, and will not be retarded. We have nothing of time, but the present moment, and this vanishes just as we imagine that we have grasped it and made use of it. But the more precious time is, the more attention does God pay to your employment of it. He acts as a rich merchant who would teach his son good business methods. He gives him a sum of money and says: My son, take this money and trade with it as well as you know how, the entire gain shall be yours. If I see that you do well, and invest your money to good purpose, I will increase the capital; but if I see that you do poor business, I shall keep my money and withdraw my aid. The son takes the money, but instead of doing business with it, he begins to squander it, he leads a dissolute life, and soon not only exhausts this money, but gets into debt. The father then calls his son to account and refuses him more money. The Lord God is, as it were, the rich merchant, and we are the children. He trusts us with the precious time in order that we may put it to good account, and become rich in celestial treasures and wealth. "Trade, till I come," He says (Luke xix, 13), the entire gain shall be yours. Make good use of the time, and He will be well pleased, but if you misuse it for sinful purposes, He will be angry and call you to account. Examine yourselves, dear Christians,

as to how you have employed the time during the past year. If your conscience tells you that it was well spent, and that you are richer in virtues and merits, then you have accumulated treasures which neither moth nor rust can consume, nor thieves steal away from you, treasures which will endure unto the next life. Yet be vigilant, lest through grievous sin you lose it again! Should your conscience reproach you with having ill-used the hours and days of this year, that you have devoted them to sins and vices, then it behooves you to acknowledge and praise the goodness of God, who has had patience with you and not chastised you as you deserved. Very many, who have employed in sin the time allotted them, have died in their sins, unrepentant, but you are still living and God has given you time for repentance and amendment. Do not miss this opportunity, for you know not how long it will last and whether God will still grant you to-morrow the grace which He offers you to-day. Make use of the fleeting time to do penance, amend your life and store up merits for heaven. It is an ancient law which says: "Thou shalt not appear empty before me" (Exod. xxiii, 13). In particular, therefore, when we appear before the judgment seat of God we must not come empty handed, but must be possessed of virtues and merits. We know what happened to the fig-tree, which Christ found in full leaf, but devoid of fruit: He cursed it. How long hast thou, O Christian, been in this garden of the world, bearing vain leaves, but not the fruit of good works! You know not whether you will stay there much longer, or whether the Lord even in this or the coming year will not say of you: "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the earth?" Make use then of the present and coming year, that you may abound in fruits of good works, in order not to be cut down unexpectedly, and cast into everlasting fire.

Let us not bid farewell to the old year without repenting of our sins, so that the new year may not commence without our having formed the firm resolution of employing it for our soul's welfare, and then when the last day of our lives shall come, we shall be able to go confidently before the judgment seat of God. Amen.

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